

## Insomnia

### What is insomnia?

Most adults need between 7 and 8 hours of sleep each night. Anyone can have 1 or 2 sleepless nights. When you can't fall asleep or stay asleep most nights, you may have insomnia. Not getting enough sleep can cause problems including:

- Stress
- Memory and decision-making issues
- Increased pain
- General poor health

### Who gets insomnia?

Insomnia is common or likely to occur in people with one or more of these traits:

- Female
- Age 50 or older
- History of sleep problems

Other issues contributing to sleeping difficulties:

- Irregular sleep schedule or napping during the day
- A partner who snores or noise
- Consuming caffeine 4-6 hours before bed
- Alcohol or tobacco
- Mental problems such as stress or anxiety
- Medical conditions such as cancer

Cancer can make it hard to sleep. Pain, anxiety, night sweats, and problems with digestion or breathing may keep you awake.

Some cancer treatments can also create sleep problems:

- Chemotherapy
- Steroids
- Seizure, nausea, and thyroid medications
- Antidepressants
- Stimulants

**If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your health care team. They can help.**

### Tips for Sleeping Better

- Go to bed at the same time each night, and wake up at the same time each morning.
- Avoid napping or limit naps to 30 minutes or less during the day.
- Get regular exercise.
- Spend some time outdoors in the sunlight every day. Remember to protect your skin with clothing and sunscreen.
- Try to keep your eyes closed when in bed, even when you're not sleeping.
- Avoiding negative thoughts, use guided relaxation, breathe with purpose or talking positively to yourself to help overcome these negative thoughts.
- Meditation, practicing mindfulness activities.
- Get acupuncture or a massage to help you relax.

Changes in your bedroom can also help you sleep better:

- Use curtains to block light from your bedroom.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet and at a comfortable temperature.
- Put the alarm clock somewhere you can't look at it.
- Use your bed only for sleep. Do not lie in bed and watch TV or read.

If sleeping problems become serious, your doctor may prescribe a sleep medication for a short time. Other medications may also help. For example, if pain keeps you awake, pain medicine may help you sleep.

Over-the-counter medicines and herbal remedies may interfere with your cancer treatments. Do not use them without talking to your health care team first.

The social workers on HCI's Patient and Family Support team can teach meditation and relaxation skills to help you sleep better. To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-213-5699.

HCI's Linda B. and Robert B. Wiggins Wellness and Integrative Health Center offers acupuncture and massage. To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-587-4585.