



Insomnia and other Sleep Disorders

A good night's sleep is critical for the ability to function in your day-to-day life. When you don't get a full night's sleep (7 to 8 hours), you often find yourself lacking energy and unable to concentrate at your job or any activities you've planned for your day. Insomnia and other sleep disorders can seriously affect your health by impairing organ function and making you more susceptible to heart disease and depression. Additionally, accidents are more likely to occur because of sleep deprivation.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2007 update, as many as 40 million Americans may be affected by chronic long-term sleep disorders and 20 million more experience occasional sleep issues. The annual cost of this sleep loss and sleep disorders is estimated to be \$16 billion in health care expenses; indirect costs due to lost productivity and other factors are even higher.

Following is a guide to four of the most common sleep disorders affecting Americans today.

Insomnia

Insomnia is a common condition in which you have trouble falling and/or staying asleep. Insomnia can range from mild to severe, depending on how often and for how long it occurs.

Insomnia can be ongoing (chronic) or short-term (acute or transient). Chronic insomnia means that the symptoms have lasted at least three nights a week for more than a month. Acute insomnia lasts for less time and can be described as inadequate or poor-quality sleep and may be a single episode or recurring, separated by periods of normal sleep.

Some people with insomnia may have difficulty falling asleep. Others may fall asleep easily, but wake up after too short a time. Others may have trouble both falling asleep and staying asleep. As a result, insomnia can cause a person to get too little sleep or have poor-quality sleep. You will not likely feel refreshed when you wake up.

Overview

There are two types of chronic insomnia. The most common type is secondary (or comorbid) insomnia. This type of insomnia is a symptom or side effect of another problem.

More than eight out of ten people who have insomnia are believed to have secondary insomnia. Certain medical conditions, substances, medications, and sleep disorders can cause secondary insomnia.

In contrast, primary insomnia is not due to any other cause; it is its own disorder. A number of life changes can trigger primary insomnia, including long-lasting stress and emotional upset.

Insomnia can cause excessive daytime sleepiness and a lack of energy. It also can make you feel irritable, anxious, and/or depressed. You may have trouble focusing on any of your normal tasks, paying attention, learning, and remembering. This can prevent you from performing your best at work or school. Insomnia also can have other serious effects. For example, you may feel drowsy while driving, which could lead to an accident.

Wellness