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## STEPS TO GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

- Get up at the same time every day.
- Go to bed at the same time, even if you are not tired.
- Make your bedroom comfortable for sleeping. Keep it dark and quiet.
- Do not read, work, or even watch TV in bed. It should be used for sleep and sexual relations only.
- Create relaxing rituals such as taking a warm bath, or reading a good book to name a few.
- Exercise regularly, but do it at least four hours before bedtime.
- Eat healthy, as some foods may cause heartburn.
- Avoid cigarettes or any nicotine products close to bedtime.
- If you take naps, try to do so at the same time every day and sleep for 20 minutes or less.
- Avoid sleeping pills, or use them conservatively as they can become addictive.
- If stressful thoughts are on your mind, writing them down should help and putting them aside should help.
- Move the alarm clock to where looking at the time will not be a distraction

*\* Referral to a sleep center for evaluation and treatment may be necessary if there is no improvement. Many medical centers have sleep centers.*

### Mission Statement

The Pat Walker Health Center, University Health Services provides professional and comprehensive medical care, mental health care, health education, and health promotion for a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. We, the University Health Services Staff of the Pat Walker Health Center, have a commitment to physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional health, the highest standards of quality, and appreciation of the value of each individual. Through these endeavors we support the educational mission of the University of Arkansas and the growth of each individual.

### Pat Walker Health Center University Health Services

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# INSOMNIA



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## WHAT IS INSOMNIA?

*Insomnia* literally means “no sleep,” but most people who complain of insomnia actually experience “poor sleep.” Such as trouble falling off staying asleep, awakening too early, or experiencing restless sleep. Clinical insomnia (sleeping less than five hours in a 24 hour day) can be caused by medical problems as well as normal age-related changes in sleep patterns.

Insomnia can affect your reflexes, thought processes, balance, and other functions, and lead to falls and automobile accidents. Women and older adults are most likely to be affected by insomnia, but it also occurs in workers who rotate shifts and in travelers who experience “jet lag” due to time zone changes.

Severe insomnia can weaken your immune system, cause illnesses like high blood pressure, or make existing illnesses worse. Many medical conditions can cause insomnia as well as many medications. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if this may be the cause of any symptoms.



Insomnia is often related to sleep apnea. Someone with this condition stops breathing for short periods while asleep. Spells can last 10 seconds or longer can occur many times. People with sleep apnea often complain of daytime sleepiness. It mostly affects overweight men. Sleep apnea increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart and lung diseases, and strokes. Treatment may include weight loss and using a respiratory aid during sleep. Sleeping pills and alcohol should be avoided.

Treatment for insomnia can include medication or behavioral changes. Prescribed medicines may include sedative, muscle relaxants, and antihistamines. Various herbal preparations and nutritional substances are also available. Any other medical condition should be treated before starting sleep therapy.

Behavioral therapy may include trying to change bad sleep habits or reduce nervous awakenings. Relaxation methods including biofeedback, abdominal breathing, and muscle relaxation training are sometimes effective. Sleep restriction therapy involves decreasing the amount of time spent in bed to increase the percentage of time asleep. Increase the time in bed by 15 to 30 minutes per night as sleep efficiency improves.



### RESOURCES:

[National Sleep Foundation](#)  
Phone: (202) 347-3471  
[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

[American Sleep Apnea Association](#)  
Phone: (202) 293-3650  
[www.sleepapnea.org](http://www.sleepapnea.org)

[National Center on Sleep Disorders Research](#)  
Phone: (301) 435-0199  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/index.htm)

