

## What is Insomnia?

Insomnia or the inability to fall or remain asleep can take many different forms and has multiple causes. We can identify two main types of insomnia. Sleep-Onset Insomnia (problems falling asleep, also called Initial Insomnia) Sleep-maintenance insomnia (waking during the night and early in the morning) Many people have a combination of these two types of insomnia. Insomnia may also be chronic (nearly every night) or intermittent (occasional insomnia).

It is estimated that over 50% of adults suffer from some sort of insomnia. While we all have occasional nights when we struggle to fall asleep, nothing can describe the frustration of battling to go to sleep night after night! (For more info on children's sleep problems, [click here](#))

### What is Healthy Sleep?

In order to understand the causes of insomnia, we need to have a look at how the sleep cycle works.

The amino acid L-tryptophan (found naturally in certain foods) is converted during digestion into 5-HTP and used in the manufacture of a neuro-transmitter called serotonin. Serotonin, in turn, is transformed into a sleep hormone called melatonin by the pineal gland in the brain. The pineal gland only becomes active after dark. By regulating levels of melatonin, our bodies create the 'sleep-wake cycle'. Of course the process is more complex than this and there are other things that could contribute to sleep problems. However, sufficient production of serotonin and melatonin is crucial in promoting and maintaining healthy sleep.

### What causes insomnia?

There are many potential causes of insomnia, including sleep apnea, snoring, bladder or prostate problems, stress or depression. People who are over 60 years old and women going through the menopause are more prone to insomnia, probably due to decreased levels of melatonin in the brain. Other causes of insomnia include 'restless legs' syndrome (RLS), magnesium or iron deficiency, hormonal imbalance, shift work and excessive consumption of caffeine or other stimulants. Insomnia is also a side effect of some prescription anti-depressant medication.

It is thought that more than 50% of all cases of insomnia are linked to psychological causes, including depression, anxiety and stress.

Sleep-onset insomnia is generally linked to environmental factors (e.g. noise, extreme temperatures, environmental change, etc), anxiety and stress, fear of insomnia or nightmares, pain, alcohol and caffeine.

Sleep-maintenance Insomnia is often associated with depression, sleep apnea, nocturnal myoclonus, Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS), hypoglycemia, pain, drugs, alcohol and environmental factors.

What is the best way to treat insomnia?

Medical science recognizes the strong association between good health and good quality sleep. Unfortunately, due to lack of understanding and limited time, many conventional doctors do not take the time to investigate what the cause of a sleep disturbance might be and simply write out a prescription and send the patient on his or her way. This is not always the best long term solution.

The Conventional Medical Approach Doctors usually prescribe antihistamines (e.g. Nytol, Benadryl) or a class of drugs called benzodiazepines (e.g. Valium, Lorazepam, Alprazolam, etc) to treat insomnia. While these drugs may be effective in the short term, they can both cause serious long term problems, including addiction and disturbance of normal sleep patterns. Benzodiazepine addiction, in particular, can develop very quickly and using benzodiazepines for longer than a week or two may result in a lifetime of dependence. Using strong drugs to fall asleep often means that the body's natural sleep cycle is disturbed and the ability to fall asleep naturally is lost. The person often needs to take stronger and stronger medication in order to fall asleep at night. Grogginess in the morning is not uncommon.

Restoring Healthy Sleep the Natural Way

Naturopaths recognize that sleep is like a barometer. When someone consistently struggles to sleep, this is a sign that something is wrong and needs to be investigated. Perhaps there are problems at work or in a relationship. Perhaps there is a depression that needs to be treated. Maybe there is a serotonin or a magnesium deficiency which needs attention. Maybe there is another condition which is causing the sleep problem. Simply taking strong drugs to fall asleep is not enough and can further complicate the picture.

Fortunately it is possible to treat insomnia in a natural and more holistic way, resulting in a long-term solution which does not damage your health or lead to addiction.

There are many different 'natural' remedies on the market. Not all of these are as 'natural' as they claim to be. Others are not very effective due to inferior formulation or failure to take a more detailed and scientific approach to the treatment of insomnia. Unfortunately this has meant that many people have given up on finding a healthy, natural approach to insomnia. Native Remedies treats insomnia seriously!

We realize that insomnia can seriously affect your sense of well being and also your ability to cope. That is why we treat insomnia seriously and are constantly updating our formulas in line with new developments. Modern research has shown that in order to treat insomnia effectively, one first has to determine the type of insomnia one is dealing with as well as what is causing the insomnia and try and correct this so that a healthy sleep pattern can be re-established. Each person is different and has different needs. Recommending a natural remedy is only a part of the solution.

Use the following guidelines to determine the best approach for you.

A. For people who are healthy but suffer from intermittent sleep-onset insomnia, not more than twice a week:

Some people suffer from intermittent sleep-onset insomnia caused by stress, worry or an overactive mind. This can be very distressing while you struggle to 'switch off' and fall asleep, knowing that you have to wake up and function in a couple of hours. Sometimes occasional insomnia becomes so bad, that it can develop into chronic insomnia due to the association between bed and stress. There are many herbs which can induce deep relaxation naturally, thereby helping you to drift off to sleep without strong drugs and preventing the development of more chronic insomnia. A combination of herbal and homeopathic ingredients offers the best solution to help you fall asleep naturally and wake refreshed in the morning.

Make sure you have regular exercise

Learn stress management and relaxation techniques

Avoid alcohol, caffeine and other recreational drugs, especially close to bedtime

Use Serenite Plus Drops when needed to promote relaxation and induce a state of drowsiness. Newly formulated to include both herbal and homeopathic ingredients for even better sleep inducing properties, the selected herbal and homeopathic ingredients of SerenitePlus provide extraordinary calming properties and act as a tonic for the nervous system, helping you to get a full night's sleep and awaken refreshed and revitalized. If intermittent sleep difficulties are your problem, Serenite Plus is a proven, 100% safe, non-addictive alternative to prescription sleeping pills.

B. For people who suffer from chronic insomnia (more than twice a week) and who struggle to fall asleep as well as remain asleep (sleep-maintenance insomnia)

Chronic insomnia is often linked to low serotonin levels caused by depression, anxiety, dietary deficiencies, chronic illness, prostate problems, menopause or being over the age of 60. Insomnia may be almost a nightly battle and you may also wake up in the middle of the night and early morning. People who suffer

from chronic insomnia and fall into any of these categories, will need a little extra help. Inducing drowsiness may help initially, but would not be a complete solution. To address the needs of people with chronic insomnia, Native Remedies has formulated Serenite-LT - a solution which addresses the causes of insomnia in order to achieve long term relief. Serenite-LT contains Hypericum perforatum and Schizandra chinensis (wu wei zi) selected herbs known for their ability to balance serotonin levels and to help the body to cope with stress. In addition, Serenite-LT contains Calcium, Magnesium and Vitamin B6, all well documented as playing an important role in maintaining a healthy sleep cycle. For a complete solution:

Use Serenite-LT twice daily as directed along with Serenite Plus Drops when needed. Serenite-LT normally takes effect within 3 - 5 weeks, although some people respond even earlier. Most people find that they need SerenitePlus Drops less and less as Serenite-LT restores healthy sleep patterns.

Eat a healthy diet and make sure you have regular exercise

Avoid alcohol, caffeine and other recreational drugs

If you are depressed, anxious or stressed, take steps to make changes that will help you (Using Serenite-LT will also help with depression and anxiety)

C. For chronic insomnia associated with the elderly (men and women), women going through the menopause, adults and teenagers who have always been problem sleepers since childhood and those whose insomnia is resistant even to prescription drugs:

Add Triple Complex Sleep Tonic to the daily use of Serenite-LT.

D. For insomnia associated with prostate problems and frequent need to go to the bathroom at night:

Use Serenite-LT and Serenite Plus Drops along with Prostate Dr. Won't a prescription anti-depressant or sleeping tablet do the same job?

Of course this is your choice and can be discussed with your doctor. However, remember that insomnia may be a side effect of some of the prescription anti-depressants. Furthermore, clinical trials have suggested that St John's Wort, one of the ingredients of Serenite-LT, is just as effective as many of the major prescription anti-depressants, but has far fewer undesirable side effects.

What about other herbal products like Valerian and L-tryptophan?

Valerian is a herb which is often used for insomnia and it can be very effective. However, we prefer not to make use of Valerian in our remedies. Most experienced naturopaths are aware of the fact that continued use of Valerian can worsen or cause depression.

L-tryptophan is not an herbal product. L-tryptophan is a chemical which is naturally found in some foods. It is used by the body to manufacture serotonin and melatonin. That is why L-tryptophan has been used as an aid to sleep and a treatment for depression. In the 1980's there was a serious problem of contamination of L-tryptophan. This caused over 40 deaths and more than 2000 people developed a disabling muscle disorder called eosinophilia-myalgia syndrome (EMS). Although it is asserted that the problem was temporary and has now been resolved, at Native Remedies we care for your health and would not like to take a similar risk!

What about Melatonin?

Because melatonin is a naturally occurring substance in the body and is directly responsible for inducing sleep, it can be a very effective aid in the treatment of insomnia.

However, melatonin is often synthetically manufactured (called pharmaceutical melatonin) and therefore not a natural remedy - or it can be directly derived from animal sources, which carries the risk of contamination. It is not always clear what the source is of the melatonin sold in health stores.

There has also not been sufficient research on the long-term effects of taking additional melatonin. There are suggestions that regular use could suppress the body's own production of melatonin, causing a chronic sleep problem or that taking additional melatonin can have a negative effect on the immune system, particularly in people who are prone to auto-immune illnesses like arthritis, lupus, MS, etc. The amount of melatonin found in sleep and depression remedies is many times the amount needed for healthy sleep and no one really knows what the effects could be in the long term.

Our policy at Native Remedies is to introduce as few foreign chemicals into the body as possible, especially those that have not been adequately researched and, as far as possible, to use herbs and other natural ingredients which have been tried and tested, clinically and traditionally, to be both highly effective and safe.

Native Remedies has answers based on scientific principles and up to date research!

During times of physical and emotional stress, we know that the body uses more serotonin than it can produce. Without adding anything artificial to the body, Serenite-LT stops the over metabolism of serotonin, allowing it to naturally return to optimum levels. Taken over a 3 - 5 week period, Serenite-LT will therefore restore normal sleep patterns. While Serenite-LT is taking effect, we recommend Serenite Plus Drops to help induce drowsiness and relaxation before bedtime and Triple Complex Sleep Tonic to assist the body in processing nutrients on a

cellular level, thereby maximizing cellular health and ensuring balanced sleep hormones.

Many people have found that their sleep problems disappear completely after a course of Serenite-LT combined with Serenite Plus Drops and that they are able to once again fall asleep and stay asleep without the use of any medication at all.