

# Insomnia

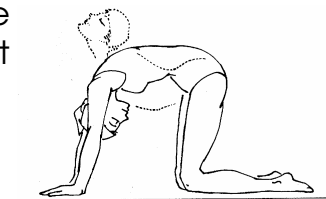
## Information Sheet

Not being able to sleep at night can be a most frustrating, yet very common experience for many people, especially when you finally do get to sleep, and you find it is time to get up again. There are many possible causes for insomnia, such as stress and tension, hormonal imbalances, and dietary factors. And there may be no apparent cause.

## What you can do

### Before bed:

- ◆ Run feet under cold water.
- ◆ Massage feet and ankles for 5 minutes (there are important pressure points on the ankles for promoting relaxation and sleep).
- ◆ Try not to eat 3 hours before sleep.
- ◆ Try having a cup of hot milk, half an hour to one hour before bed, or herbal tea such as Chamomile or Valerian.
- ◆ There is also a natural amino acid supplement available, known as L-Tryptophan. This amino acid is needed in the brain's production of Melatonin, the chemical in the brain that induces sleep. Take as directed before bed.
- ◆ Hold the forward bend posture (sitting, legs straight out in front of you and together. Lean forward from the waist, keeping the back relatively straight). Imagine breathing in up the backs of the legs and breathing out from the tail bone up the spine and out of the top of the head.
- ◆ Practice Cat and Cow gently 10 to 15 times (inhale up into cow and exhale down into cat), then rest back into Yoga Mudra.



### In bed:

Sometimes it can be very useful to have a small ritual on getting into bed which allows you to separate this time of resting and recharging from the busy and stressful world from which you have come. This could be something as simple as giving thanks for the day, for any blessings given and any lesson learnt. Or you could try recounting your day mentally running through the things that you achieved, people you met, what you learnt, what you liked or what you disliked, etc. Or you could try doing a quick body part awareness meditation - known as a Yoga Nidra Meditation. This is done by scanning through the different parts of the body, starting from the top of the head and moving down to the toes. ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR ABOUT A YOGA NIDRA CD.

- ◇ **Wiggle your toes and rotate ankles.** Then rub your lower abdomen in both clockwise and anticlockwise circles. Stretch your fingers and then massage your ears. (This is good to do before you get out of bed also).
- ◇ **Try sleeping on your right side.** This opens your left nostril, and the right side of the brain, which is responsible for sleep, is activated. Or try alternate nostril breathing or closing off the right nostril and breathing through the left for 5 minutes.
- ◇ **Ujjayi Pranayama.** Here you restrict the glottis in the throat so that as you both inhale and exhale you make a slight snoring sound, and you can actually feel the breath in your throat, just behind the upper palate.
- ◇ **Navel to throat meditation.** Visualize a ball in the navel, rolling up to the throat on the in breath and then rolling back to the navel on the out breath. You could combine this with Ujjayi Pranayama.
- ◇ **Counting the breath.** Probably best to start from 100 and count backwards.
- ◇ **Counting with the breath.** For example, breathe in for a count of 4, and out for 4. Or in for 6, hold for 3 and out for 9.

#### Things to avoid:

- Drinking coffee or tea close to going to bed.
- Smoking cigarettes close to bedtime.
- Eating 3 hours before bedtime.
- Watching too much television before sleeping.



You might like to try just one or all of the above suggestions. See what works for you and what is easy to fit into your routine. Remember, that even if you still don't sleep, by using breathing techniques and meditation you can still give your body and mind the rest it requires.

Check with your instructor if you are unsure about any of the information, and especially before practicing the breathing techniques, to make sure that you are doing them correctly.