

# The consequences and treatment of insomnia

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



For the third night in a row, Dennis has counted each of the one hundred and thirty two pieces of driftwood that made up his bedrooms ceiling. One by one, left to right, he would count each piece of wood, hoping that this puzzle would cause him to close his eyes and doze off. When he had reached the last tile, he had felt no difference than when he started. He was still wide awake. Tossing and turning from side to side, he would try to find the position he was most comfortable in. No matter how comfortable he was in his soft pajamas while laying in his cozy bed or how fatigued he was from the past day of productivity at the office, nothing would allow his body to shut down. Dennis would try having a quick midnight snack, turning on the ceiling fan above his bed, and turning on some calming music to help him sleep, but nothing that he tried worked. Dennis constantly checked the clock to see how much time he has left to sleep until his 6: 45 alarm for work. Each time he checked, he would become more desperate to close his eyes and fall asleep, knowing that the day ahead without sleep would be unbearable. The time had passed from 1: 15 to 2: 30 and from 3: 20 to 4: 45, and soon enough it was 5: 57. Knowing that there was no chance he would fall asleep at this time, Dennis painfully rolled out of bed to start his day. For the third night in a row, Dennis had unwillingly laid awake in his bed, having to go about his day without a wink of sleep.

This scenario Dennis has himself stuck in is called sleep deprivation, also known as insomnia. Insomnia is a problem because it causes fatigue and unawareness, it is becoming more common, and it increases health risks. Some would argue that having insomnia is beneficial because it will allow

you more time to be productive. The solution to sleep deprivation is to talk to a doctor to seek medicine or therapy.

Insomnia will not only negatively affect those who have it, but also negatively affect the people they are around. People with insomnia tend to be fatigued during the day, affecting how they perform at work or school. Apparently, 37.9% of the 70 million people that have a sleep disorder reported unintentionally falling asleep during the day at least once in the preceding month ('Sleep and Sleep Disorder Statistics' 1). The effect of fatigue from insomnia on a person can also have a negative impact on their motor skills. In fact, 4.7% of the 70 million adults in the United States that have a sleep disorder reported nodding off or falling asleep while driving at least once in the preceding month ('Sleep and Sleep Disorder Statistics' 1). Drowsy driving is responsible for 1550 fatalities and 40000 nonfatal injuries annually in the United states ("Insomnia - Overview and Facts." 2). Dangerous driving and bad work performance due to fatigue show how much insomnia can affect a person in a negative way.

Another problem that insomnia creates is that it is becoming more common, negatively affecting each person who has it. Today, approximately 50% of adults experience occasional bouts of insomnia, and one of ten complain about chronic insomnia (Avidan 2). Comedian and actress Amy Poehler is one of those who has suffered from insomnia: Sleep and I do not have a good relationship. We have never been good friends. I am constantly chasing sleep and then pushing it away. A good night's sleep is my white whale. Like Ahab, I am also a total drama queen about it. I love to talk about how little

sleep I get. I brag about it, as if it is a true indication of how hard I work. But I truly suffer at night. Bedtime is fraught with fear and disappointment. When it is just me alone with my restless body and mind, I feel like the whole world is asleep and gone. It's very lonely. I am tired of being tired and talking about how tired I am ... I now read articles about how great sleep is and how important it is and I cry because I want it so bad and I am so mad at how great everyone else seems to be at it. (Yes Please, October 2014) Although there are two different types, acute and chronic, both still weaken those who have it. Tests have shown that 20-50% of adults have acute insomnia, which can last a couple of days to a few weeks (Heffron 1). 10% of adults have been diagnosed with chronic insomnia, which can occur for three night per week for a month or longer (Heffron 1). Although both genders struggle with the disorder, women are claimed to have it a little worse than men do. In fact, insomnia is approximately twice as common in women as in men (Avidan 2). Also, according to the American Pregnancy Association, nearly 80% of pregnant women experience some insomnia symptoms (Konkel 2). The increase in the population of people with a sleep disorder is problematic. Insomnia also is a problem because it increases the health risks in people who have the disorder. Sleep deprivation has been claimed to be tied to problems such as anxiety, depression, and other physical/ mental health issues. 3-5% of the overall proportion of obesity in adults could be attribute to a shortened amount of sleep (' Sleep and Sleep Disorder Statistics' 1). Late singer Michael Jackson suffered from insomnia, and " He was so much concerned about his inability to sleep, as researchers say his may have developed into psychophysiological insomnia; people with this disorder worry

too much and constantly be anxious to sleep normally”(Chukwu 1, January 2016). The effects of insomnia can also lead to more severe problems, including heart failure, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia (a serious mental illness that interferes with a person’s ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions), and may surprisingly lead to death. In fact, 100,000 deaths occur each year in hospitals in the United States due to medical error and sleep deprivation have been shown to make a significant contribution (‘ Sleep and Sleep Disorder Statistics’ 1). In a 2010 study of both men and women ages 50 to 79, more deaths occurred in both men and women who got less than five hours or more than six and a half hours of sleep per night (“ Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation: An Unmet Public Health Problem” 2). The health risks insomnia generates is a big problem for anyone who has it.

However, having insomnia is not always a problem because sleep deprivation has been linked to improvement on tests as well as an improvement in attitude and mood. Many tests have proven that people who get little to no sleep perform better on tests involving reaction time or brain activity. AsapSCIENCE ran a test to see how early birds and night owls perform on similar reaction time tests one hour and ten hours after they all wake up in the morning. They report that early birds and night owls perform equally well in reaction time tests one hour after waking up, but night owls perform significantly better than morning people in similar tests ten hours after waking up (Seyam 2). Another test ran was a 2009 study by the University of Liege in Belgium that monitored 15 “ extreme night owls” and 16 “ extreme early birds” and had participants stay on their normal sleeping

schedules. Researchers measured their brain activity after participants first woke up, and then once again 10.5 hours later. The study found that participants scored similarly on the first test, but that 10.5 hours after waking up, the early birds had lower activity in brain regions linked to attention and the circadian master clock, compared to night owls (Matthews 1). A National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) study found that subjects who restricted their sleep to 30 minutes every 4 hours (3 total hours of sleep in a 24-hour period) were more alert and performed better than when they restricted their sleep to an uninterrupted 3-hour period (Avidan 2).

Theories have also been tested based on the fact that sleep deprivation can improve a person's mood. The effects of sleep deprivation on the human body were observed and analyzed in the 70s: There's evidence of antidepressive effect after sleep deprivation. As a matter of fact, subjects experienced a 37.2% improvement in their mood (Seyam 3). Researchers also analyzed 66 studies and determined that partial sleep deprivation could improve depressive symptoms in as little as one day (Seyam 2).

The facts of how insomnia positively affects brain activity and mood shows that sleep deprivation is not always a problem. If necessary, there are a couple of solutions to curing insomnia, including talking to a doctor or pharmacist. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (also known as the CDC) has conducted many tests showing how most Americans act when wanting to cure their insomnia. Data found by the CDC suggests that about 4% of US adults used prescription sleep aids in the past month (Heffron 2).

Popular prescription medicines and over the counter medicines include Temazepam (Restoril), Triazolam (Halcion), Zaleplon (Sonata), and Melatonin. Some studies from CDC show promise for the use of melatonin in shortening the time it takes to fall asleep and reducing the number of awakenings, but not necessarily total sleep time (9). There are also specific doctors you can talk to about sleep deprivation called sleep specialists. A sleep specialist is a medical doctor who has completed additional education and training in the field of sleep medicine. Some doctors also recommend stretching and loosening the tightness in the muscles of your body, increasing blood flow. Stretching also encourages the release of endorphins, providing a sense of tranquility and euphoria, and stretching directly before bed will even give you a more comfortable sleeping experience. Actress Jennifer Aniston has also discovered her own solutions to help her achieve sleep: My one key tip [for battling insomnia] ... is to sleep with my phone at least five feet away from me. That's helped me tremendously. And I also do a quick meditation before I get into bed, even if it's just for five minutes. There are also some yoga poses that I've found to be quite helpful in relaxing my mind, even if it's just a simple downward dog and some stretching. But the biggest thing is the electronics shutdown, ideally an hour before I turn off the lights. It's really a big deal. (The Huffington Post, April 2016)

It is important that people discover solutions, especially solutions that work for themselves, that will allow them to sleep because more sleep is a beautiful thing. Sleep is crucial, and with these solutions, sleep is achievable.

This paper has explored the many problems with insomnia. Sleep deprivation is a problem because it negatively affects those who have it as well as the people who surround them. It is also a problem because it's becoming more common and it will increase the health risks of those who have developed the disorder. The fatigue a person has after no sleep can lead to drowsy driving and falling asleep at the wheel, putting their own life and others lives at risk. How common it has become has left most people in a state of unawareness throughout the day. The health risks that insomnia rises can negatively affect you for the rest of your life. However, insomnia can also trigger brain activity, improving results on testing with certain abilities. The solution to this issue includes seeing a doctor that will most likely prescribe you with remedies or recommend stretching to loosen the body and increase blood flow. Unless we take action now, insomnia will take over and negatively affect us all. Coming from someone who has insomnia, I recommend you do everything you can to prevent the disorder from affecting you, because it is a gargantuan struggle to have.

On his way to work, Dennis turned on the radio and turned on the country station, singing along with the song while trying to keep his eyes open. He was steering the car with his left hand and held a dark mocha frappuccino in his right hand. Dennis took a sip of his drink and then placed it in the cupholder, placing his hands at ten and two on the steering wheel. His eyes felt heavy and his body was tired as he took a right turn onto Hilliard Blvd. The sun has yet to rise and Dennis felt drowsy, thinking about how good it would feel to close his eyes and fall asleep. Dennis woke up in a hospital bed 2 weeks later. He ended up hitting another car head-on, killing the other



driver and putting himself in a coma. The doctors told Dennis that the collision will leave him paralyzed, having to travel by wheelchair for the rest of his days. Sleep would've not only prevented Dennis from being paralyzed, but the other driver from being killed. Sleep deprivation is dangerous and could have significant consequences if one fails to change sleep habits. If obtaining quality sleep is difficult for you, you must seek professional and medical advice to help cope with this habit.