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# Having trouble sleeping

Having trouble sleeping is probably one of the most annoying things in the world. The first step to fixing your disrupted sleep is to think about some of the possible causes. If nothing's working and it's really starting to get to you, there are steps you can take to get a good night's sleep.

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## What does it mean when you're having trouble sleeping?

There is nothing more frustrating than waking up in the middle of the night and not being able to get back to sleep, or not being able to sleep when you first get into bed. Unfortunately, sometimes it can be hard to work out the cause, but it's really important to try to figure out what the story is when you're having trouble getting some solid shut-eye. If you know the reason that you're having trouble sleeping, it's much easier to resolve the problem.

## Common reasons for having trouble sleeping

- Not being able to **stop thinking** or switch off your mind.
- **Feeling too awake** to fall asleep when you get into bed.
- Not getting enough **exercise or sunlight**.
- Eating food **too close to bedtime**.
- Exercising **too close to bed time**.
- **Environmental issues** – e.g. being too hot or cold, or there being too much noise.
- Waking up from **snoring**.

### You might find this useful if...

- you've been having trouble sleeping
- you want to figure out why you've been having trouble sleeping
- you want to figure out when having trouble sleeping is a problem.

### What can I do now?

- Check out the factsheet 'How to get a good night's sleep.'
- Get some more info from the 'Insomnia' factsheet.
- Keep a sleep diary to try and figure out why you're having trouble sleeping (<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/docs/WS-sleep%20diary2.pdf>).



- Taking **stimulants**, like caffeine or nicotine, too close to bedtime.
- Being awoken by **chronic pain**.
- **Feeling anxious about something.** Often, if you're having trouble getting to sleep when you first go to bed, it's because you feel tense and worried. See the 'All about anxiety disorders' fact sheet for more info on feeling anxious.
- **Feeling down or depressed.** Sometimes, when people wake up in the night it's a sign that they're feeling pretty down. See the fact sheet 'Feeling sad' for more info.
- **Disrupted daily cycle.** Your body works on a 24 hour cycle and releases hormones at certain times of day to prepare you for certain events, such as falling asleep and waking up. These rhythms are called circadian rhythms and when they get out of whack it can cause all sorts of problems. Check out the fact sheet 'Circadian rhythms and depression' for more info.
- **Some medications.** Some diet pills, blood pressure, allergy and asthma medications can cause sleeping problems.
- **Other physical problems.** Sometimes, if something is wrong with you physically, one of the signs is having trouble sleeping.

## When does having trouble sleeping cause a problem?

Everyone has trouble sleeping from time to time – as annoying as it is, it's completely normal to have bad night's sleep occasionally. It can even be common to go through a bit of a bad sleeping phase, particularly if something upsetting is going on. There is a point though, where having trouble sleeping becomes more concerning. Signs you should look out for are:

- being tired all the time and having no energy from not sleeping
- falling asleep during or at work
- not being able to complete any work you need done because you're too tired



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- not being able to concentrate
  - becoming really forgetful and struggling to remember stuff
  - feeling emotionally on edge or becoming unusually moody
  - if sleeping troubles have been going on for longer than a month.

## What to do about it?

There are a bunch of strategies you can use to help you get back into a good sleeping pattern, which you can find in the fact sheet 'Getting into a sleeping routine'.

If these strategies don't work, if you're feeling anxious or depressed, or if you just can't figure out the reason behind your sleeping problem, it's a good idea to visit your GP to bring up your sleeping issues. It will be much easier and faster to work out what's going on, and treat the problem, if you seek professional help.