

# WEST AFRICAN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

## PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP WITH INSOMNIA

Insomnia can manifest itself in individuals in many ways. It can cause a person to have difficulty in falling asleep, staying asleep or even as not having a good quality sleep. The effects on an individual are huge as we all need quality, healthy and decent amount of sleep to rest our bodies and minds for healthy living. Lack of good sleep can with time begin to affect our health and well-being, our immune system and begin to play wreck on our mental and emotional capabilities fairly quickly.

Insomnia is far more common than you would think and affects people of all ages all over the world.

Factors and tips to consider in evaluating Insomnia are:

### **1. Environmental Factors:**

Create the right sleeping environment for yourself. Ensure you have a pillow, blanket and bedding to your liking so none of these factors bother you at night. Make sure the comfort, temperature and lighting is all arranged for your correct mode of sleep. Being too hot, too cold or uncomfortable can contribute to restlessness. Consider noise as well – are there any noises which keep you from sleeping – to reduce this would be helpful if this is not possible ear plugs or a pillow over your ear can also help.

### **2. Psychological/Emotional Factors:**

What is on your mind – are you under any stress. Try and find ways to deal with your stress or problems before going to bed. Try and write down things which are playing on your mind on a list kept next to your bed to deal with at another time. It can help you to feel more at peace with them when on paper and out of your mind. If you are someone who plays through their work day or things to do list – have an on-going list next to your bed to write down what comes to your mind before you go to sleep. Try and keep your mind and thoughts in the present moment when going to sleep – do not allow your thoughts to entertain the past or future. Helpful is to focus on the here and now the comfort of your bed and pillow and the peaceful sounds of silence.

### **3. Dietary Factors:**

Those who find it difficult to sleep should try as much as possible to avoid any stimulants after 2 pm in the afternoon as these can contribute to insomnia. Coffee, tea, some red wines, cigarette smoke, carbonated drinks with plenty of sugar should all be avoided in the afternoon and before bedtimes. If you are taking any medications consider that they may have a side effect as well which can affect sleep. Discuss with your Doctor if you could consider a change in medications or take them in the morning

instead of the evening for example. Many people with insomnia suffer from magnesium deficiencies – you could try and take some pure magnesium supplements to improve your sleep. Take this alone as magnesium competes with other vitamins for absorption into the body.

**4. Exercise and Physical Fitness:**

Keeping physically fit and doing exercise at least 3 times a week for 45 min sessions can do wonders to improve your general wellbeing including your sleep. If you are naturally not a sporty person you could consider walking, hiking or swimming instead of sports as such. Yoga is particularly good for those who find it difficult to relax and this also teaches you the art of deep breathing which can be very helpful in relaxation and sleep induction.

**5. Establish a Good Bedtime Routine:**

Try and create a bedtime routine for yourself which you can repeat every night. Choose to take a warm bath or shower and afterwards read a book or listen to peaceful music before trying to fall asleep and some could also then update their to do list or things to deal with the following day if this is on their mind and helpful. Try and avoid electronic devices before sleeping - computers, I pads, cell phones, TV and movies at least one hour before bedtime. Such activities tend to stimulate the mind and increase brain activities which work against the process of calming down in order to induce peaceful sleep. Ensure you have all you need for the night next to you including water, or tissues so once you are in your bed you can try and sleep immediately and do not have to get up again.

**6. Avoid Sleeping at any other times other than at night time:**

One of the biggest contributing factors to those with insomnia is the constant temptation to sleep during the day. This should be avoided as much as possible if you are going to establish a proper sleeping pattern. Unless you are physically ill or not well getting up early and pushing yourself through the WHOLE day without lying on the bed even to rest is important for a good few weeks to establish a healthy sleeping routines.

MEDICATION TO HELP YOU SLEEP should be a last resort and only taken for three to four days at a time to get one into a correct habit and avoid dependence. Remember if you are sleeping from chronic insomnia reach for professional help of a medical practitioner or a psychologist to support you as it can affect your whole well-being.