

## Insomnia & Sleep

“Human beings spend, on average, one third of their lives asleep. A spell of insomnia can wreak havoc with our health and wellbeing if left unchecked and spiral us into exhaustion and chronic stress.”

### The main causes of insomnia are:

1. Anxiety, to the point where the subconscious mind deems it too dangerous to lose awareness. Being in a ‘hyper responsive’ state leaves us more sensitive to noise both before and during sleep.
2. An overactive mind, being unable to ‘switch off’. Worrying about the day’s activities and planning ahead to the next day is a guaranteed way of staying awake.
3. The subconscious mind’s disruption of REM sleep (dream sleep). This prevents the person from going back to sleep.
4. The belief that we must have seven or eight hours sleep each night or we will underperform and create more problems for ourselves. This is unhelpful.
5. Doing stimulating things prior to bedtime; such as, exercising late, eating too much, drinking tea or coffee and not keeping a sensible late evening routine.

### Reflexology

*Gao, W Wang Z, and Liu H. Preliminary Exploration of Treatment for Insomnia, China Reflexology Symposium Report, Beijing, China Reflexology Association (1996).*

70 patients with insomnia were given foot reflexology.

Group A was given 10 sessions, twice a day and Group B was given 10 sessions, once a day. Group A showed 88.7% improvement after five days and 100% after ten days.

Group B showed 22.86% improvement after five days and 91.43% after ten days.

Foot reflexology was found to be effective in the treatment of insomnia. There is also plenty of research and evidence into reflexology’s effectiveness at reducing anxiety.

### Aromatherapy

A relaxing aromatherapy massage with sedating and sleep promoting essential oils can help relax the body and empty the mind to induce an excellent night’s sleep. A warm bath with essential oils at night time will also help to promote sleep.

#### My favourite insomnia blend is:

4 drops of clary sage (avoid during pregnancy)

4 drops of ylang ylang

2 drops of frankincense.

Mix the essential oils together, undiluted and then add them to 5 ml of vegetable oil. Adding half a kilogram of Epsom salts to the bath really boosts this insomnia blend’s effectiveness. See the ‘How to use Essential Oils Guide’.

### Tips for a great night’s sleep

1. Keep regular hours. Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time each day will program your body to sleep better.
2. Create a restful sleeping environment. A bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep, it should be neither too hot nor too cold and kept as dark as possible during sleep.
3. Get a comfortable bed; it’s hard to get a good night’s sleep on a bed that is too hard, too soft, too small or too old.
4. Take more exercise. Regular exercise such as sleeping or walking can help to relieve the day’s stresses and strains - but not too close to bedtime!
5. Cut down on stimulants such as caffeine. Found in tea and coffee, they interfere with falling asleep and deep sleep. Drink herbal teas instead.
6. Don’t overindulge. Too much food or alcohol just before bedtime can play havoc with sleep patterns. Alcohol will help you fall asleep initially but it will interrupt your sleep later in the night.
7. Don’t smoke. Smokers take longer to fall asleep, wake up more often and experience more sleep disruption.
8. Try to relax before going to bed. Play some relaxing music or a relaxation CD, take an aromatherapy bath and try some yoga or stretching.
9. Make lists of tasks that need to be tackled the next day or week if you have a heavy workload, reduce the need to think about things at bedtime. Just thinking about what you need to do can release stress hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol.
10. If you can’t sleep, get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again. Don’t lie in bed worrying about not being able to sleep.

[www.sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk)

The Sleep Council have an excellent website. ([www.sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk)). You can access lots of free resources; for example, sleep plans, mattress guides, leaflets and free podcasts with relaxing nature sounds such as birdsong and waves.