

Getting ready to talk to your doctor about sleep

Simple steps to help you feel prepared and supported while you wait for your appointment



Track Your Sleep

Track your sleep patterns by using the Sleep Diary provided on this website, SleepDebt.ca.

A Sleep Diary will help you to track when you go to bed, when you wake up, how often you wake during the night, and how rested you feel in the morning. This information will be used by your doctor during your assessment to aid in diagnosis and treatment planning.

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Know Your Medical History

Your doctor will need a full picture of your health to recommend the most appropriate treatment for you.

Be prepared to share:

- Any medical conditions you have (e.g., diabetes, migraine, or mental health conditions)
- Current prescription medicines or over-the-counter products, supplements, or herbal remedies
- Any previous experiences with sleep medications or other treatments
- Any allergies or sensitivities to medications
- Family history of sleep disorders, if relevant

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Understand Your Options

Knowledge is power! Understanding the available treatment options for insomnia in Canada can help you have a more informed and productive conversation with your doctor. Before your appointment, we recommend reading through the options available to you. Your doctor can help you figure out what's best for your situation.

Available Treatment Options

Sleep hygiene

Approaches and strategies that can help improve sleep quality. While sleep hygiene alone is not considered a treatment for insomnia, it is an important component of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT-I).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)

A discussion-based approach that may help you identify and address thoughts, feelings, or behaviours related to your sleep issues.

Over-the-counter products

Products that you can purchase from most pharmacies off the shelf. While these may help with occasional sleeplessness, many of them are not clinically approved for insomnia and are not intended for long-term use.

Some OTC products have uncertain effectiveness or risky side effects that may outweigh their benefits, so it's important to talk to your doctor or pharmacist before starting a new product.

Prescription sleep medicine

Prescription medicine may be recommended for people who struggle with sleep due to insomnia. There are newer prescription medicine options that are not associated with physical dependence, are safe for long-term use, and are intended to support a physiological sleep-wake rhythm with minimal impact on next-day functioning.

When considering any medicine, it's important to talk to your doctor to understand its potential benefits and side effects for your individual situation.

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Prepare Your Questions

Having questions prepared in advance for your doctor can help with the conversation. We've provided some common questions below to ask your doctor; however, we also encourage you to add your own.

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Some example questions include:

- What could be causing my sleep difficulties?
- How might other health conditions I have be affecting my sleep?
- Are there lifestyle changes I can try to improve my sleep?
- What treatment options are available if changes to my routine aren't enough?
- Are there different types of sleep medications, and how do they work?
- How long would I need to take a sleep medication if it's recommended?
- How can I reduce the chance of dependence or morning grogginess while taking sleep medication?
- When should I schedule a follow-up appointment with you?

My questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Tell your doctor how poor sleep impacts your day-to-day life and your health and remember that your health is of utmost importance. Know that you are not alone, and that safe and effective treatments for insomnia are available.

What Is Insomnia?

Before your appointment, it can be helpful to learn more about insomnia, what it is, how it may affect the body, and why getting help matters.

Insomnia is having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, and can be short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic). If left untreated, insomnia can take a serious toll on your body and overall well-being.

Daily symptoms

You may be very familiar with some of these symptoms already.



Day

- Daytime fatigue and exhaustion
- Poor emotional, mental, physical, and social function



Night

- Trouble staying asleep and/or falling asleep
- Not waking up when you want to
- Not feeling refreshed after sleep

Long-term health risks

Chronic sleep issues, or insomnia, can worsen:

- Mental health conditions
- Type 2 diabetes
- Weight gain and obesity
- High blood pressure
- Other chronic health conditions

In addition, perimenopause and menopause increase the likelihood of developing chronic sleep issues.

Remember, better sleep starts with a conversation.

By understanding your sleep patterns and discussing them with your doctor, you're taking the first step towards getting the restorative sleep you deserve. **Safe and effective treatments for insomnia are available, and your doctor can help find one that's right for you.**