

Chronic Insomnia

Insomnia or lack of adequate quality sleep is divided into three categories, transient, intermittent and chronic. About 10 percent of the population suffers from chronic insomnia. Chronic insomnia is a very complex condition, and there are no simple answers to its causes. It is usually a symptom of some underlying physical or mental disease. It may be prudent to refer to specialists for help to pin down the root cause. Physical diseases like arthritis, asthma, Parkinson's disease, hyperthyroidism, prostate problem, degenerative neurological disorders, GERD, kidney problem, heart failure, rhinitis and various types of sleep apnea are causes of chronic insomnia. Mental health disorders like stress, anxiety, grief, depression, schizophrenia, panic disorder, mania and acute psychosis are also causes. Behavior patterns like smoking, alcohol, caffeine, shift work and medications sometimes contribute to chronic insomnia. Chronic insomnia needs holistic management rather than a simple treatment. Health professionals can help and guide, but the patient is the one who should manage the condition. It is important to treat the underlying physical or mental disorder first. Treatments include modifying life style habits; creating a correct environment for sleeping; mild aerobics exercises; snacks before bedtime containing tryptophan found in milk, figs, bananas, dates and tuna; avoiding foods containing tyramine and medically supervised drug therapy. Other methods include relaxation therapy, hypnotism, yoga, meditation, music and aromatherapy, recondition therapy (insomniac is allowed in bed only when sleepy), and sleep restriction therapy (sleeping habit's are studied and bed is only for sleep time, gradually increasing with therapy), and cognitive behavior therapy, which seeks to correct the perception of the patient of inadequate sleep. If chronic insomnia is not managed properly, it can lead to many serious consequences. Driving and handling machinery becomes dangerous, as sluggishness and dizziness are common among insomniacs. Patients experience problems at work because of poor performance, low energy level and lack of concentration. They also experience problems with family and friends, as irritability make the patient flare up for no reason.

About the Author

Cardiopulmonary Physical Therapy Journal is a publication covering the science and practice of physical therapy in relation.

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