

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I), rather than sleeping medications, is now recommended by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine as the first-line treatment for insomnia. CBT-I is a semi-structured program that helps you optimize your sleep schedule and identify and replace thoughts and behaviors that cause or worsen sleep problems with habits that promote sound sleep.

CBT-I has been shown in numerous clinical studies to improve sleep in around 75-80% of insomnia patients. CBT-I is as effective as sleeping pills at the start of treatment but results in a much more sustained benefit, whereas sleeping pills tend to lose their effectiveness over time. CBT-I has been shown to be effective in patients with obstructive sleep apnea, depression, anxiety, PTSD, chronic pain, perimenopausal symptoms and other health issues which might be contributing to poor sleep.

There are several different options for CBT-I:

- 1) Schedule four to six sessions with Dr. Jonelis, each one to two weeks apart and each for one hour. You should keep a sleep diary for one week before your first appointment.
- 2) Purchase an online CBT-I program through <https://www.sleepio.com/>, or <http://shuti.me/> (cost is around \$135-\$300, other options are also available)
- 3) Visit a local psychologist or therapist who does CBT-I (we can provide you with a list).
- 4) Read a book on CBT-I, we recommend Quiet Your Mind & Get to Sleep. Solutions to Insomnia for Those with Depression, Anxiety, or Chronic Pain. Paperback (Dec. 2009) by Colleen Carney and Rachel Manber

Choose whichever option seems like the best “fit” for you.

What will you learn during your CBT-I sessions? The exact content varies depending on your needs, but the format of the sessions usually looks something like the following:

- 1) Learn about the normal structure of sleep and common causes of insomnia; determine goals of treatment, review current sleep patterns. Homework: think about your ideal pattern of sleep.
- 2) Learn about the effects of light and our environment on our sleep and alertness levels. Homework: assess your pattern of light exposure, exercise, temperature.
- 3) Discuss the role of cognitive arousal in insomnia and introduce techniques to help calm the mind, discuss techniques to facilitate sleepiness at night such as mindfulness, buffer zone time, progressive relaxation and deep breathing. Homework: Read about dysfunctional beliefs about sleep (DBAS).
- 4) Discuss DBAS, discuss which techniques have been most helpful and decide which ones to continue once treatment has ended.

If you are taking sleeping medications before the start of treatment, you will likely need one or two additional sessions to focus on tapering off of these medications.