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# Insomnia and Its Effects on the Human Body

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# Abstract

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that is affecting many people. It's effects can cause long term damage, to both the physical and the mental state of the subject. Many things can cause insomnia ranging from caffeine, to traumatic events witnessed. Insomnia can be treated with lifestyle changes, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, and medicines. Insomnia is exceedingly common in today's society, with all the bright lights, distractions, and constant contact with other people. It is not unreasonable to predict that in as growth continues a majority of the populous will be affected by this disorder.

# Insomnia and Its Effects on the Human Body

Insomnia is a very common sleep disorder amongst people today. This disorder causes the subject to have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. There are two types of insomnia, Acute Insomnia and Chronic Insomnia. Treatment is available through medicines or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. This disorder affects many people today because of the stress and the extra responsibilities of the new age.

Insomnia is the common sleep disorder in which the subject has trouble falling asleep, and or staying asleep. The subject might find himself or herself laying awake for long periods of time before he or she falls asleep. The sleep that the subject does get tends to be over a very short period of time and unrewarding. The lack of sleep can cause other issues in the subject's life. They may feel tired during the day and have issues focusing on tasks. Insomnia can also lead to anxiety, depression, and irritation. The lack of sleep could hinder the subjects ability to learn and to stay focused on a task. There are two different types of insomnia: Acute Insomnia, and Chronic Insomnia. Acute Insomnia is known as short-term insomnia, because it usually only lasts for a few days or a few weeks. Chronic insomnia or long-term insomnia usually lasts for at least a month or longer.

Women are found to be more at risk than men for insomnia. Insomnia affects older adults but can occur at any age. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute have found that there are things that increase the risk of insomnia such as:

* Have a lot of stress.
* Are depressed or have other emotional distress, such as divorce or death of a spouse.
* Have lower incomes.
* Work at night or have frequent major shifts in their work hours.
* Travel long distances with time changes.
* Have certain medical conditions or sleep disorders that can disrupt sleep.
* Have an inactive lifestyle.

(What is Insomnia?, 2011)

Acute Insomnia is often a symptom of an emotional, neurological, or other medical disorders. Some examples of emotional problems that can cause insomnia include depression, anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder. If the subject has experienced some traumatic event such as an accident, death or have recently gone through a divorce, these events can lead to acute insomnia. Also physical pains such as heartburn, menopause, arthritis and other continuing pains can be factors that cause insomnia. Stimulants such as caffeine, and tobacco can also cause insomnia.

Chronic Insomnia is its own disorder instead of a symptom of other disorders. Very little is known about the cause of Chronic Insomnia but, it is theorized that large life changes are usually what causes this. Things such as long-lasting stress, or emotional turmoil could trigger Chronic Insomnia. For example, a man named Bob, and a woman named Susan, have been married for 20 years. They have two beautiful children and seem to have the perfect life. However, one day Susan leaves Bob for another man and takes the children with her. This traumatic and emotionally devastating experience could cause Bob to become depressed and trigger an episode of Chronic Insomnia. Bob would spend every night lying in bed thinking what he did wrong and about how much he missed her. This is just one of many situations that could trigger Chronic Insomnia.

Diagnosing insomnia in a patient will take much investigation into the subject's life. The medical history, and sleep history will be reviewed. These will show if there are any stimulants or activities the subject partakes in that would play a factor in the disorder. Things that would be red flags would be things like use of caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, or a lot of long distance travel. A physical would also be performed to rule out medical issues such as thyroid problems. The final study that would be conducted would be a sleep study, also known as a polysomnogram or PSG. The PSG records brain activity, eye movements, heart rate, and blood pressure. (What is Insomnia, 2011) All of these test will assist the doctor in diagnosing insomnia in a patient.

There are many different treatments for insomnia, they include: lifestyle changes, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, and medicines. Lifestyle changes is the easiest way to help remedy the disorder. The patient would be required to avoid stimulants, and alcohol. Also a new nighttime routine would be constructed. This would consist of a more relaxing night time ritual, along with making the sleeping area more sleep friendly. This can be done by removing distractions from the room.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy focuses more on the feelings of the subject and tries to remedy the problems that the subject thinks about, when they are supposed to be sleeping. Also techniques to control their own body are taught, to help relax the body. CBT can consist of group therapy or single sessions. Sessions would need to be had weekly for 2 or 3 months. (What is Insomnia, 2011)

There are also medicines that can be prescribed to a patient to help treat insomnia. These products include melatonin, L-tryptophan supplements, and valerian teas or extracts (What is Insomnia, 2011) However, prescribed sleep aids can be habit forming, and can cause other side effects.

With the proper treatment many people recover from it, but it is never cured. If the patient falls out of the prescribed lifestyle or off the medication, it could come back. An interesting future study would be to have the patient record what experiences they have during a long time awake. To see if there is a correlation between their symptoms and the cause. So for example if a patient hallucinates the ghost of his dead parents, then that could lead to a traumatic event that he might have witnessed in his youth. Another interesting test that could be performed would be to test the patient and see what the test scores showed. This could show whether the human mind would get worse and worse as time progress or if there was some sort of limit to how much deterioration could happen.

In summation, Insomnia is a sleep disorder that is affecting many people. It's effects can cause long term damage, to both the physical and the mental state of the subject. Many things can cause insomnia ranging from caffeine, to traumatic events witnessed. Insomnia can be treated with lifestyle changes, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, and medicines. Insomnia is exceedingly common in today's society, with all the bright lights, distractions, and constant contact with other people. It is not unreasonable to predict that in as growth continues a majority of the populous will be affected by this disorder.

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