

## **Sleeping disorders – Insomnia and Parasomnia**

Insomnia is one of the most common health problems. Symptoms of insomnia include lack of energy, loss of memory, easy agitation and difficulties in concentration during daytime; at night time, patients have difficulties getting into sleep; frequent awaking and early waking up.

Insomnia can be temporary or continuous. If poor sleep persists for longer than one month and occurs more than three times a week, one can be regarded as having insomnia, which can seriously affect his/her daily life. Insomnia is mainly caused by psychological and behavioural reasons, like stress and environment factors. Alcohol, some medications and psychiatric disorders, like major depression and anxiety disorder, can lead to insomnia.

Taking sleeping pills without medical advice is not preferred. Patients are advised to improve their sleep habits, such as having regular bedtime hours, getting out of bed when they cannot sleep for a long while, and avoid having exciting activities before sleep, avoid drinking coffee, tea, coke, and alcohol after dinner, quitting smoking, having more regular exercises and sun-bathing, and performing some muscle-relaxing exercises before bed. If insomnia does not improve, they should consult a doctor.

Parasomnia, such as sleep walking, sleep terror, sleep talking and rapid eye movement sleep behaviour disorder, is another sleep problem. Sleep walking and terror are common among children due to their immature brain development. For adults, parasomnia can be due to psychiatric disorder, brain disease, and medications.