

# Chronic Insomnia and Daytime Dysfunction: Evaluating the Benefits of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

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## DESCRIPTION

Chronic insomnia represents one of the most prevalent and debilitating sleep disorders, affecting millions of individuals worldwide. Unlike transient or short-term insomnia, which is often associated with situational stressors and resolves once the trigger subsides, chronic insomnia persists for weeks or months and significantly disrupts daily functioning. It is characterized by difficulty in falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early and being unable to return to sleep, despite having adequate opportunity for rest.

The impact of chronic insomnia extends beyond the nighttime hours, as individuals often report fatigue, irritability, poor concentration, and decreased productivity during the day. These consequences not only affect personal well-being but also strain professional performance and interpersonal relationships, ultimately leading to a diminished quality of life. Traditionally, pharmacological treatments such as hypnotics and sedatives have been employed to address insomnia. However, the growing awareness of side effects, risk of dependency, and limited long-term efficacy has shifted attention towards non-pharmacological approaches, with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT-I) for Insomnia emerging as the gold standard treatment.

Relaxation techniques also form a valuable part of CBT-I. Insomnia is closely tied to hyperarousal, both physiological and cognitive, where individuals experience racing thoughts, elevated heart rate, or muscle tension at night. Techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, or mindfulness meditation are incorporated to reduce arousal and prepare the body for sleep. These methods not only improve the sleep onset process but also provide patients with coping strategies for managing stress and anxiety beyond sleep.

The effectiveness of CBT-I has been demonstrated across numerous clinical trials and meta-analyses. Studies consistently show that CBT-I produces significant improvements in sleep

onset latency, wake after sleep onset, total sleep time, and sleep quality. Importantly, these benefits are maintained over time, often persisting long after treatment ends. In contrast, pharmacological treatments tend to lose effectiveness over time and carry risks of tolerance and withdrawal symptoms. The durability of CBT-I outcomes makes it a preferred first-line therapy for chronic insomnia in clinical guidelines issued by organizations such as the American College of Physicians and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

Another important dimension of CBT-I is its adaptability. While traditional CBT-I is delivered in-person by a trained therapist over several sessions, alternative delivery methods have emerged to increase accessibility. Online and digital CBT-I programs have gained popularity, offering structured modules that patients can complete at their own pace, often supplemented by virtual support from clinicians. These digital interventions have shown promising results, expanding access to populations who may not have the time, resources, or geographical proximity to seek in-person therapy. Furthermore, group-based CBT-I sessions and integration of CBT-I into primary care settings have broadened its reach, ensuring more individuals benefit from its effectiveness.

The broader significance of CBT-I extends beyond simply improving sleep. Chronic insomnia is often comorbid with psychiatric conditions such as depression and anxiety, and evidence suggests that CBT-I can improve not only sleep outcomes but also reduce symptoms of mood disorders. Improved sleep strengthens emotional regulation, enhances resilience, and may reduce the risk of developing more severe psychiatric conditions. Likewise, in patients with medical conditions such as chronic pain, cardiovascular disease, or cancer, CBT-I has shown benefits in improving sleep quality, which in turn positively impacts overall health and quality of life. Thus, CBT-I can be viewed not just as a treatment for insomnia, but as a critical intervention for enhancing holistic health.

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