

# COMBATING INSOMNIA

TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS  
AND CONCERNS

**Q:** I am a 45-year-old woman and suffer from insomnia. My doctor suggests that it can be due to the onset of menopause. Do you have any suggestions?



**A:** Kathy Young Keefe R.N., Kim Renton R.N. Co-Creators of enVy®, the Anti-Aging/ Wellness Pillow

Insomnia is a great source of worry; but to be fair, worry is a great source of insomnia. It seems a rite of passage that life gets complicated as we approach our 40's. As a member of the sandwich generation, you may be coping with changing family dynamics of temperamental teenagers transitioning into young adults, or aging parents with health issues.

We may find time for ourselves, yet still have to deal with changing relationships, financial worries, our own midlife health issues and, quite often, hormonal changes. Perhaps the 'onset of menopause' is as much about life changes and stressors as about hormones.

Declining hormone levels may certainly impact your sleep/wake cycle, as will a racing mind wondering about yesterday's what if this and tomorrow's what if that. As Dale Carnegie once said, "It's the worry that gets you, not the lack of sleep." The solution to sleepless nights depends on the cause. Follow these five basics for a good night's sleep:

- 1. Cool your bedroom:** You may have a super-sensitive hot flash threshold during menopause. Try to keep your body cool, but not uncomfortable. Anything that raises your body temperature can trip the switch— keep your bedroom cool at night.
- 2. The bedroom should be dark and quiet:** This sends your brain the message that nighttime is for sleep. Light and sounds cue you to wake up and stay up. Use eye masks, white noise machines, or ear plugs.
- 3. Drop the stimulants:** Caffeine, smoking, alcohol, chocolate, and some supplements or diet medications have side effects. They may disturb sleep.
- 4. Practice good sleep hygiene:** Go to bed at a regular time, use your bed only for sleep and sex, relax before bed, keep the TV out of the bedroom, and don't eat for at least two hours before retiring.
- 5. Sleep in proper alignment:** You might have a hard time falling asleep because your body is not comfortable. If you need to turn within minutes of positioning yourself for sleep, your body is trying to tell you something. If you wake up with a sore back, sore shoulder, neck pain, or headaches, ask yourself if your mattress or pillow gives enough support. The ideal pillow should be contoured to your neck and supportive enough to align your head and body. This will allow your body to relax. Once your body is relaxed, sleep will come much more easily.

If you have taken care of these basic sleep prerequisites, yet you're still not sleeping well, please visit a health practitioner for professional advice. Disrupted sleep may affect your well-being and overall health.