What Is Insomnia?
When you can’t fall asleep or stay asleep all night, you may have insomnia. Most adults need between seven and eight hours of sleep each night. Anyone can have one or two sleepless nights, but if this happens often it becomes a problem. Not getting enough sleep can cause stress, memory and decision-making issues, increased pain, and general poor health.

Who Gets Insomnia?
Insomnia is more likely for people with one or more of these traits:
• Female
• Age 50 or older
• History of sleep problems
• Mental problems
• Medical conditions such as cancer
Other problems can also make it hard to sleep:
• Irregular sleep schedule
• Stress or anxiety
• A partner who snores
• Noise
• Too much caffeine
• Alcohol or tobacco use
• Too much napping during the day

How Does Cancer Affect Insomnia?
Cancer can make it hard for you to sleep. Pain, anxiety, night sweats, and problems with digestion or breathing may keep you awake.

Some cancer treatments can also create sleep problems:
• Chemotherapy
• Seizure, nausea, and thyroid medications
• Antidepressants
• Stimulants

If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your health care team. They can help.

Tips for Sleeping Better
• Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning.
• Avoid napping or limit naps to 30 minutes or less during the day.
• Get regular exercise.
• Spend some time outdoors in the sunlight every day. (Remember to always wear protective clothing and sunscreen.)
• Try to keep your eyes closed when in bed, even when you’re not sleeping.
• Try to let go of things that worry you at bedtime. Avoid going over troubling thoughts. If this is difficult for you, the Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) Patient and Family Support team can teach you helpful techniques (see box below).

Changing your sleeping environment can also help with sleeplessness:
• Block out light from your bedroom with curtains.
• Make sure your bedroom is quiet and a comfortable temperature.
• Put the alarm clock somewhere you can’t look at it.
• Use your bed only for sleep. Do not lie in bed and watch TV or read.

If your sleeping problem becomes serious, your doctor may prescribe a sleep medication for a short time. Other medications may also help. For example, if pain keeps you awake, a pain medication may help you sleep better.

HCI’s Patient and Family Support team can teach meditation and relaxation skills to help you sleep better.

Our team is available Monday–Friday from 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-585-9755.

www.huntsmancancer.org/pfs

Over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies may interfere with your cancer treatments. Do not use them without talking to your health care team first.