

## **Insomnia-Further Information**

### **How common is insomnia?**

About 30-40% of adults have some degree of insomnia within any given year and about 10-15% indicate that the insomnia is chronic or severe. Insomnia increases with age and is more common in women. Women are about 1.3 times more likely to report insomnia-like sleep problems than are men.

People over 65 years of age generally have approximately 1.5 times higher rates of sleep difficulty compared with adults younger than 65 years.

Children can also have problems with insomnia and the rates for adolescents are similar to adults.

### **What causes insomnia?**

Problems with sleep will nearly always be related to a medical, psychiatric, circadian, sleep, behavioural, lifestyle or environmental disorder.

Acute insomnia is closely related to a major life event such as pregnancy, a significant stress at work or bereavement. Once the major life event settles down, the insomnia should also settle.

The development of chronic insomnia is often complex.

An important factor in its development appears to be a tendency to hyper-arousal. This means increased alertness during the day and during the night. People with hyper-arousal have a higher heart rate during the sleep period, have increased anxiety and tend to think about their problems during the period of sleep.

### **What are the consequences of insomnia?**

There are a number of consequences of insomnia and large studies in the general population have shown that there can be a negative economic impact on society as a whole.

Insomnia can cause excessive sleepiness during the day which can impact on activities such as driving and the operation of machinery, as well as decreasing concentration and learning. Other consequences can relate to mood. Many people with ongoing problems with insomnia become depressed or generally agitated.

Insomnia can also worsen an underlying medical condition.