

# Insomnia

**Getting enough sleep is important for good health.** Insomnia, or disturbed sleep, can lead to problems with concentration, memory, mood and judgement.

If you are experiencing insomnia, it is important to tell your doctor. He or she will look for the cause of your sleep problems before recommending any treatment. Keep a sleep diary with the following information to show your doctor:

- When you fall asleep and wake up
- Problems falling asleep
- Waking up too early
- Waking throughout the night
- Naps during the day
- The quality of your sleep, including vivid dreams or nightmares
- Drug and alcohol use
- How much caffeine you drink during the day
- When you normally eat
- Medical problems (including pain and mental health issues)
- Medications you are taking

Your doctor should also give you a physical exam and blood tests to check for cardiovascular, respiratory or hormonal reasons, especially thyroid function, that may be causing sleep disturbance.

Many people think sleeping pills are the answer to insomnia and your doctor may prescribe them for a short time to help re-establish a pattern of sleeping. However, sleeping pills become less effective over time and can be addictive, so they are not usually recommended on an on-going basis. In addition, they can interact with HIV drugs. There are other things you can do to improve your sleep.

## **Do:**

- Sleep only enough to be refreshed
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day
- Get some exercise daily
- Make your bedroom as quiet and comfortable as possible
- Seek help if you are suffering from depression, stress or anxiety
- Learn relaxation techniques

## **Don't:**

- Drink anything with caffeine or alcohol before bedtime
- Go to bed hungry
- Smoke close to bedtime
- Nap during the day 

# CNS Side Effects OF Sustiva

Many of the side effects associated with Sustiva affect the central nervous system (CNS), such as dizziness, insomnia (trouble sleeping), drowsiness, trouble concentrating, vivid dreams and changes in mood. Knowing about these side effects before you start treatment can make them easier to recognize and manage.

Nearly everyone will get some Sustiva side effects, but for most people they will be mild. Side effects are more common in the first two to four weeks of treatment and generally become easier to tolerate as you get used to them. In some cases, side effects may continue for longer than the first month.

## **Tips for managing side effects:**

- Start Sustiva on the weekend or when you have time off work.
- Do not eat a high-fat meal with Sustiva.
- Take Sustiva about two hours before you go to sleep, rather than at bedtime.

Although rare, some people experience more severe Sustiva side effects such as clinical depression, paranoia and thoughts of suicide. If you experience any of these symptoms, alert your doctor immediately.

Many of the Sustiva side effects can also be symptoms of HIV-related diseases such as dementia or cryptococcal meningitis. Be sure to describe all your symptoms to your doctor so that the cause can be identified.

Your doctor can help you manage Sustiva side effects by prescribing medications to treat insomnia and anxiety or changing the time of your dose. If the side effects do not go away or become intolerable, you can switch to another HIV drug. But don't just stop taking Sustiva! While switching HIV drugs can be safe and may reduce side effects, it must be done in consultation with your doctor. 

*Adapted from HIV i-Base at <http://www.i-base.info/pub/guides/side802/index.html>*

*See also: <http://www.aidsmeds.com/drugs/SustivaTipSustivaTips1.htm>*