

# How Long Has it Been Since You Had a Good Night's Sleep?

## Washington Hospital Seminar Offers Tips for Insomnia

**W**hen was the last time you had a good night's sleep? Does your mind start racing at bedtime? If you have difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep, you may have insomnia.

"If you ask a good sleeper what they need to do to fall asleep, they will probably tell you that they just lay down and go to sleep," said Dr. Nitun Verma, director of the Washington Township Center for Sleep Disorders. "But if you ask someone with insomnia, they usually have a list of things they do. Sleep is an automatic process; it's not something you can make your body do. Sometimes the more you try to make yourself sleep the harder it will actually be to go to sleep. It can backfire."

Verma will talk about insomnia and offer tips for sleeping better at an upcoming Washington Hospital seminar. "Are You Having Trouble Falling Asleep?" is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, February 1, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The free seminar will be held at the Conrad E. Anderson, M.D. Auditorium, located at 2500 Mowry Avenue (Washington West) in Fremont. Register online at [www.whhs.com](http://www.whhs.com) or call (800) 963-7070 for more information.

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder that affects about one in three adults, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Up to 10 percent are likely to have chronic insomnia.

### Chronic Insomnia

"Everyone can have a bad night's sleep or go through a period where they aren't sleeping well," Verma said. "But when it goes on for weeks or even months, you may need to get help from someone who specializes in sleep disorders."



Do you have insomnia? Find out how to get a good night's sleep at a free upcoming seminar at Washington Hospital. A physician specializing in sleep disorders will discuss sleep patterns, as well as causes of and treatment options for sleep disorders. The class is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1, from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Conrad E. Anderson, M.D. Auditorium, Rooms A & B, (Washington West) located at 2500 Mowry Avenue in Fremont. Visit [www.whhs.com](http://www.whhs.com) to register.

Symptoms of insomnia include having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, low energy, lack of motivation, daytime sleepiness, frustration or worry about sleep, and problems with attention, concentration and memory.

"Just because you have these symptoms doesn't mean you have insomnia, but they are a good indication that you are not getting a good night's sleep," he added.

Verma will discuss some of the reasons people have difficulty sleeping and explain how the brain works. While a medical condition, medication use, and mental health or substance abuse issues can affect sleep, it is often the result of not being able to turn off the brain.

"The brain is like a racecar without a brake pedal," he explained. "It can accelerate and change lanes, but there is no brake to jam on at the last minute. You have to let up on the gas and allow your brain to coast to a stop."

Verma said people with insomnia say they feel like they are "tired but wired." They are physically exhausted, but can't get their brains to slow down long enough to sleep.

### Good Sleep Habits

He will talk about the importance of having good sleep habits to develop a healthy sleep pattern and will provide a number of examples that will help people get a better night's sleep.

"If you Google insomnia, you will get a lot of tips for getting a

better night's sleep," Verma said.

"Many of my patients tell me they tried them and they didn't work. That's because you first need to understand how the brain works and how to slow it down."

Some examples of good sleep habits include going to bed and waking up at the same time every day and creating a quiet, dark sleep environment. He said it's also important to have a relaxing bedtime routine and not to use the computer or watch television in bed.

Verma will also discuss some of the prescription and over-the-counter medications that are available to help people sleep. He said these can be effective, but cautioned against overuse.

"Even the best sleep medication wears off and you are faced with the same problem," he said. "We may be creating a population of people who don't think they can sleep without sleep medication. These medications are not a permanent fix."

The Washington Township Center for Sleep Disorders can help those who suffer from chronic insomnia find long-term solutions so they can sleep better. The clinic treats all types of sleep disorders, including sleep apnea and narcolepsy. To learn more about the Center, visit [www.washingtonsleep.com](http://www.washingtonsleep.com).

For more information about other classes and seminars offered at Washington Hospital, visit [www.whhs.com](http://www.whhs.com).

## Help Your Heart: Keep Your Diabetes Under Control

Free Seminar Looks at How to Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

Most people know that to keep their car in good condition, they need to get regular oil changes and maintain or replace parts like hoses and pumps to prevent a major automotive catastrophe over the long term.



To help people in the community learn more about the relationship between diabetes and cardiovascular disease, Washington Hospital is sponsoring a free "Diabetes Matters" class, featuring a lecture by Washington Hospital cardiologist Dr. Ash Jain, (above) medical director of the Washington Hospital Cardiovascular Institute. The class is scheduled for Thursday, February 2, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Conrad E. Anderson, M.D. Auditorium (Washington West) located at 2500 Mowry Avenue in Fremont. Visit [www.whhs.com/diabetes](http://www.whhs.com/diabetes) for more information.

The same is true of your heart and entire vascular system—the network of blood vessels, including arteries, veins, and capillaries that transport vital oxygen and nutrients all over the body, according to Washington Hospital cardiologist Dr. Ash Jain, medical director of the Washington Hospital Cardiovascular Institute.

### Your heart and diabetes

"Uncontrolled diabetes is a major risk factor for vascular problems, which is why I talk a lot about it during seminars on heart disease and stroke," Dr. Jain says. "People need to understand that diabetes puts them at significant risk for both heart attacks and other cardiac diseases."

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**When:** Saturday, February 11, 2012

**TIME:** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WHERE:** Conrad E. Anderson, M.D. Auditorium, 2500 Mowry Avenue (Washington West), in Fremont  
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## Help Your Heart: Keep Your Diabetes Under Control

Jain. A question-and-answer session will follow the lecture. The class is scheduled for Thursday, February 2, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Conrad E. Anderson, M.D. Auditorium in the Washington West Building at 2500 Mowry Avenue in Fremont, followed by an hour-long support group meeting.

"Diabetes progresses over time and often has no symptoms during early stages of the disease," Dr. Jain says. "And even though you cannot feel it, it is affecting your entire body from head to toe, including all the blood vessels, from capillaries to major arteries. Damage to these large arteries can cause heart attacks due to blockages, and damage to small arteries can cause weakness of the heart muscle called diabetic cardiomyopathy. Diabetes can also affect high blood pressure and cholesterol.

**Widespread damage**

He says that if arteries in the brain are affected, it causes strokes; if the kidneys are affected, it could lead to kidney failure. Plus, damage to arteries in the legs can lead to gangrene and amputation. Diabetes is also so damaging to the nervous system that people may not even know that they are having a heart attack, known as a silent heart attack, according to Dr. Jain.

"Because diabetes causes damage to the body's nerve endings and limits the sensation of pain, people with diabetes who have a heart attack may not have the typical symptom of crushing pain in the chest," he adds. "More likely, they will instead experience symptoms such as shortness of breath, weakness, and extreme fatigue."

Plus, due to the disease's slow progression, without regular doctor's exams people may not even know they have heart disease to begin with.

"I cannot stress this enough: people with diabetes should have thorough medical check-ups at regular intervals," he says. "Your annual exam at your doctor's office should include a stress test and an evaluation of the peripheral vascular system."

**Controlling your risk factors**

Dr. Jain says it's also important for people with diabetes to address both high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, which are also risk factors for heart disease.

"During the Stroke Education Series seminars that I present, I talk about high blood pressure and

cholesterol levels as contributing factors for stroke," Dr. Jain says. "During the Diabetes Matters seminar, I also mention these things because they are all connected."

"If you manage your blood pressure and keep your cholesterol levels in check, it will dramatically reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, and several other chronic conditions, including helping to manage your diabetes."

For people with diabetes, maintaining blood pressure within the range of 120/80 to 130/90 is very important, he says. In terms of managing cholesterol, people with diabetes should aim for a "total" cholesterol level of 150—with the LDL or "bad" cholesterol below 70 and the HDL or "good cholesterol" above 40.

**Keeping your heart healthy**

Dr. Jain will also offer several other guidelines and recommendations for reducing your risk factors for heart disease, including:

- Blood sugar control
- Weight management
- Incorporating regular exercise into your routine
- Quitting smoking
- Home monitoring of blood glucose levels
- Getting regular A1C blood tests at the doctor's office

The A1C blood test shows the average blood sugar level during the past two or three months and gives your health care team a better idea of how well your diabetes treatment program is helping to manage your blood sugar. Dr. Jain stresses that the A1C test does not replace the need for daily self-testing of blood glucose.

**Education is key**

"Education is a very important part of the process when it comes to diabetes management," Dr. Jain says. "Some people think that a diagnosis of diabetes will ruin their lives. The truth is that you have to manage the disease, but you can do it without making yourself miserable."

As an added bonus, he says, almost everything you do to improve your diabetes will help to prevent heart disease, which remains the No. 1 killer in the United States.

"We have very excellent interventions available for treating heart disease, but unfortunately—and we're not sure why—outcomes of these treatment options are not as good in people with diabetes."

"The bottom line is that you want to manage your diabetes to the best of your ability and do everything in your power to prevent heart disease."

**Get the support you need**

Support group meetings are held at 8 p.m. immediately following the hour-long Diabetes Matters lecture, which begins at 7 p.m. the first Thursday of each month. Family members and friends are also welcome. For more information about the support group or other classes and programs, call the Diabetes Services program at (510) 745-6556 or visit [www.whhs.com/diabetes](http://www.whhs.com/diabetes).

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