

What to know about behavioral insomnia

Insomnia is a persistent difficulty with falling or staying asleep at night. Behavioral insomnia of childhood (BIC) is a type of pediatric insomnia that encompasses three behavioral disorders: sleep-onset association, limit-setting and combined BIC.



Types of behavioral insomnia

Sleep-onset association

Child has learned to only fall asleep under specific bedtime conditions (e.g., while being rocked, cuddled or nursed); most common among infants and toddlers.

Limit-setting BIC

Child refuses to go to bed or attempts to delay bedtime with persistent requests ("one more story").

Combined BIC

Child exhibits both a reliance on a sleep aid and defiance around bedtime.



Treatment

Most cases of BIC can be resolved with proper sleep hygiene practices that establish a regular sleep-wake cycle:

- Establish a routine sleep schedule
- Avoid stress at bedtime
- Use bed for sleeping only (no games, phone, TV or homework)
- Avoid heavy meals late in the evening
- Restrict caffeine intake 4 – 6 hours before bedtime
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a dark, quiet and cool room

BIC affects about **25%** of children

Consult your child's doctor

Sleep is an integral part of a child's physiological health and development. To promote optimal health, **children 3 to 5 years old need 10 – 13 hours of sleep per day** and **children 6 to 12 years old need nine to 12 hours of sleep per day**. If your child is not getting enough sleep, talk to your pediatrician about treatment strategies.

