

100 New Drugs, Advice Aiding Insomniacs

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NEW YORK (AP)—New drugs—and more advice—are available for the millions who find trouble woe-ling sleep.

Three new types of sleeping pills have come along in the last few years.

One group is sold over-the-counter in drugstores, with no prescription needed.

All these drugs are actually anti-histamines, says George Larrick, commissioner of the food and drug administration (FDA). At least one also contains some scopolamine, an old sleep slandering. Anti-histamines were developed to combat hay fever, asthma, skin rashes and other allergies. They also were advanced a few years ago as help in combatting allergic symptoms of the common cold.

As allergy fighters, one drawback was that some anti-histamines often made many people drowsy. This was the key to using particular anti-histamines as sleep inducers.

When one manufacturer first marketed an anti-histamine this way, the FDA objected, Larrick said. The manufacturer produced clinical studies to support his claim. The FDA had an independent medical center make studies, giving the drug to some persons and not to others, and back came word that it did often have sleep-inducing effects.

Since then a number of firms have marketed this type of sleep pill.

Used in the low dosages recommended, the anti-histamines are safe, and do not cause any harmful effects, Larrick said.

Medical experts differ in opinion whether the sleepy feelings from these drugs are more psychological than physical. They don't affect everyone.

A second class of sleep pills, sold on prescription only, came from research aimed at developing nonbarbiturate, nonhabit-forming sleep-inducers. They do not poison, and harmful effects even from tremendous overdoses have rarely been reported.

There are at least five drugs in this group, each based on a different chemical formula. They induce sleep within 15 minutes to an hour, with sleep lasting from two to eight hours, clinical tests report. Numa produces a "hang-over" the next day, as barbiturates may do.

Don't Affect Everyone

These drugs do not affect everyone in the same way—they vary in efficiency of inducing sleep and don't make some people sleepy at all.

They are generally recommended for insomnia due to excitement, fear, worry, or extreme fatigue. In smaller doses they are also used as sedatives for nervous tension. (Trademarks or drugs in this class are domnamon, coridan, noludar, valmid, placidy.)

Third in the sleep aid line are some of the tranquilizing or calm-down drugs, widely used for nervous tension and emotional conditions. Chlorpromazine, meprobrate, and reserpine (generic names), are examples, all must be used under a doctor's supervision. Their calming effects can help induce peace of mind and sleep.

Barbiturates are still in big demand. Properly used, they are invaluable in combatting insomnia. Abused, they can cause addiction, and hundreds of intentional or accidental deaths each year.

As for sleep advice, physicians blame much insomnia upon the tensions of modern life. As one says, "anxiety is the income tax of civilization."

Worries and fears can interfere with sleep. Loss of sleep leads to irritability, fatigue, and even worry over the lost sleep. That makes it harder to sleep, initiating a vicious pattern of insomnia.

Almost everyone occasionally misses out on sleep, and with absolutely no ill effects. Young army volunteers have been kept awake as long as five days with no physical harm or changes, but some did start seeing things, and most became irritable.

An English neurologist, Dr. MacDonald Critchley, puts it this way: "Sleeping little matters little. What does matter is the anxiety it produces."

The idea you must get eight hours sleep nightly causes much of the insomnia troubles, sleep experts say. Actually the amount of sleep you need varies with individuals—some need eight, some do fine on six, others need ten.

Facts, say the experts, are the facts that "lost sleep must be made up," and that you really "don't sleep a wink all night." Sleep studies indicate that the persons spending eight hours a bed probably sleeps four to five hours even though he thinks he never dozed off once.

Insomnia is a real and serious problem to many persons. It can be caused by illnesses, chronic pain, overexcitement, digestive upset, too much coffee or tobacco, and by emotional problems. The best bet is to consult a physician to find the underlying cause and remedy it.

Exactly what sleep is and how we fall asleep are mysteries. There are various theories. It may be that instead of having a sleep center in the brain, we have a waking center which becomes inactive to permit sleep.

As aids to sleep, some physicians advise warm baths, warm milk or cocoa, intentionally slowing down an hour before bedtime—avoiding thrillers on TV or in books—using a mattress that is not too soft, nor a pillow too hard.

One main bit of advice, often thought to achieve, is: banish the day's cares and worries from your mind, and think of something pleasant.

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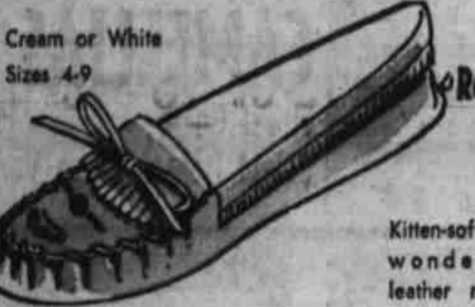
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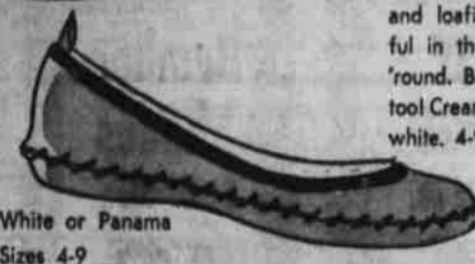


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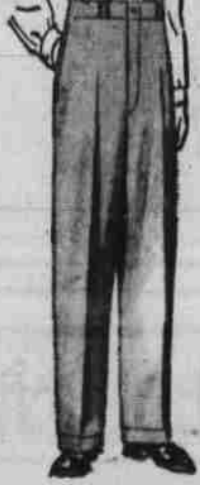
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