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Early Morning Awakening Insomnia (Advanced Sleep Phase)

If you fall asleep easily but wake too early in the morning and are unable to fall back to sleep, you may have an early timed body clock (advanced circadian rhythm). Your 'body clock' sleep time may be programmed, for example, between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. You may not want to go to bed this early because the rest of the family is still up and you will miss your favourite television programme. So, you try staying up for 1 to 2 hours later, feeling quite sleepy. You sleep well in the first part of the night but wake early – you are now in your awake zone. You feel frustrated because it is still dark, everyone else is asleep and you have only had about 5 hours sleep.

Margaret is a 68-year-old woman who retired from her part-time nursing position five years ago.

Margaret feels her sleeping difficulties worsened during menopause when she would wake at night with hot flushes. Although these are no longer a problem she still has problems waking too early.

Each evening after dinner, Margaret sits down to watch TV, however it is not long before she is feeling very sleepy and 'nods off' missing her TV show or only catching snippets of it. She eventually goes to bed about 10 p.m. and usually falls asleep within 5 minutes.

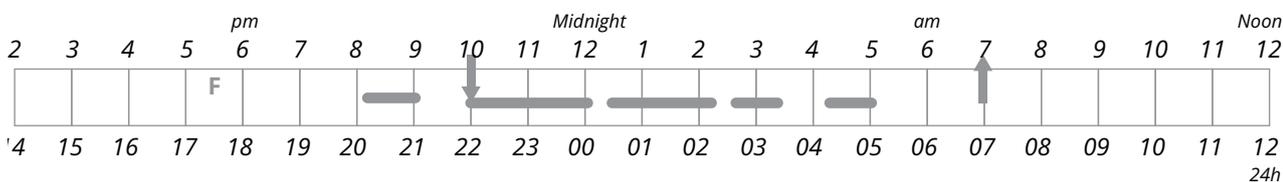
Although she has no difficulty falling asleep, Margaret wakes after 3 hours for about 20 to 30 minutes.

Margaret's final awakening is about 4:30 a.m. and she is unable to fall back to sleep despite staying in bed until 6:30 a.m. This pattern indicates an early timed circadian rhythm contributing to her early morning awakening insomnia.

During this time awake in bed she can worry about feeling tired the next day because of too little sleep. This period of worry can contribute to conditioned insomnia. Most nights, Margaret is in bed for more than 8 hours although she is only asleep for about 5 hours (only 63% of the time in bed). She

stays in bed in the morning hoping to fall back to sleep or at least get some rest. But this is usually not successful resulting in a lot of time in bed 'trying' to fall back to sleep.

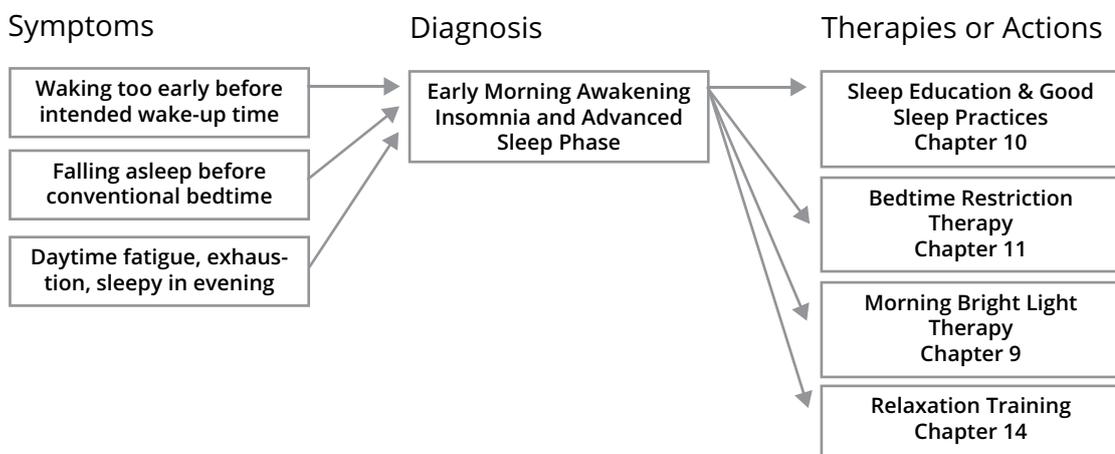
After she starts her day in the mornings, Margaret feels better. However, after lunch she often falls asleep if she sits down to read the newspaper. She feels exhausted most days.



Margaret has Sleep Maintenance Insomnia due to some conditioned insomnia and Early Morning Awakening Insomnia due to an Advanced or Early timed body clock.

Suggested Therapy

Margaret should carry out the Bedtime Restriction regime (Chapter 11) and Evening Bright Light therapy (Chapter 9).



Other causes of early morning awakening insomnia

In a few cases, early morning awakening insomnia may also be related to depression. If you think you have depression speak to your healthcare professional.

Did you have trouble identifying your sleep pattern?

Your sleep difficulty may not consistently fit any of the above examples.

A combination of sleep onset and sleep maintenance insomnia is very common in long term chronic insomniacs. Some people may experience different difficulties at different times of their lives. For example, you may have experienced Sleep Onset Insomnia for many years but notice that you now fit the pattern of Sleep Maintenance and perhaps Early Morning Awakening Insomnia. Treatment should be directed to your present sleeping difficulty.

You may also have symptoms of another sleep disorder as well as insomnia. For example, you may have symptoms of Sleep Onset and Sleep Maintenance Insomnia but also snore heavily. During the day you experience fatigue and are very sleepy. You may have a combination of Insomnia and Sleep Apnoea that has been shown by recent research to be fairly common (about 40% of those with one sleep disorder also have the other disorder). In these cases, beside the appropriate treatment for your insomnia, you may also need assessment involving a sleep recording at a sleep disorders centre (see Chapter 16) to check for the other disorder.

🔗 Questions?

We invite you to contact us with any questions relating to the content of this book:

<http://re-timer.com>