

Factors can be one or more of the following:

- stress
- smoking
- caffeine
- alcohol
- exercise
- eating large meal at night
- overworking
- relationship difficulties
- lack of fulfilment in life/boredom/no-win situation
- stimulating activities late at night (not including sex)

It is hardly surprising to find that stress is a major factor in insomnia. Stress is linked with anxiety and alteration of certain body hormones which are involved in the body's circadian rhythm.

Smoking : nicotine is a stimulant. Smoking, far from helping us to relax, is in fact, winding us up further still.

Caffeine: again a powerful stimulant. In insomnia, the body's metabolism has speeded up by nearly 10%. Insomniacs are already hyper-aroused so that adding caffeine only makes matters worse.

Alcohol, far from being a solution, can in fact become part of the problem. The likelihood is that you will awake early and possibly with a hangover to compound matters.

Lack of exercise means that our bodies are not really tired enough to require restorative sleep. Of course, chronic illness is often associated with reduced mobility.

Eating a heavy meal late at night confuses the body, which is then stocked up for action but is expected to bed down for the night shortly afterwards! However, not eating enough can also be a problem and a light snack an hour or so prior to retiring can stave off any hunger pangs that might contribute to waking you up in the wee small hours.

Overworking is an understandable trigger for insomnia. This applies to either an overworked body or, more commonly a mind wound up like a clock spring. Without a period of winding down, neither the mind nor the body are likely to be able to just "switch off";.

Relationship problems, especially within the home, can cause *angst* right up to bedtime and marital difficulties of course can follow you into the bedroom.

Worries and lack of fulfilment in life can lead to a low-grade dissatisfaction and sense of frustration with life that can prey on the mind once the busy day has been completed and there is little to distract from concerns.

Stimulating activities such as watching action films or reading a book that sets the mind working may work against relaxing into sleep. Similarly, brisk exercise late in the evening is not helpful.

Insomnia due to poor sleep habits

- trying too hard to sleep
- being conditioned against sleeping in the bedroom
- sleeping "catch as catch can";