

Insomnia

Waking up feeling refreshed after a solid night of sleep should be normal. But that's not always the case in our hurried, stressful lives. Some people may lie in bed for what seems like an eternity, unable to fall asleep because of nagging thoughts. Someone else might be able to fall soundly asleep only to be jarred awake a couple of hours later. The harder you try to sleep, the further it slips from your grasp. It's enough to drive a person crazy.

A blood and/or yin deficiency is the reason for insomnia. In Chinese medicine, it is believed that shen (consciousness) floats around during the day but when you sleep at night, shen goes to the heart. If the heart is hot, the shen doesn't want to go there because of the heat.

Acupuncture helps insomnia patients by gradually clearing the heat from the heart, tonifying the blood and/or yin and quieting the shen. In other words, calming incessant thinking and relaxing the body. In severe insomnia cases, it might be necessary to bleed the ear apex or temple (blood pressure points). But in general, the focus is on Heart 7 and Kidney 6, which are points on the inner wrist and ankle. The heart is a fire element and the kidney is a water element. If the body is balanced, the heart fire will move down to warm the kidney water and the kidney ascends to cool the heart. When the heart and kidney are communicating, it will flow in this pattern. If there's a blockage or stagnation in this flow, it could cause insomnia. One or two acupuncture treatments a week will be recommended, depending on the severity and duration of the insomnia, along with an herbal remedy.

One of the biggest causes of insomnia is emotional stress but could also be excess blood loss such as a heavy menstrual cycle, surgery, giving birth or a chronic illness like cancer. Some cases start gradually maybe due to pain, bladder or aging in general.

What can you do? Calm down before falling asleep, turn off the television and computer, keep a night routine and do some deep breathing exercises. Ruminating thoughts can

slow the flow of blood and eventually builds pressure behind a meridian, which causes heat. It's important to have an emotional life that is grounded and rooted in moderation.