

How Do You Treat Insomnia with Acupuncture in Your Practice?

By Dylan Jawahir, LMT. LAc

Insomnia is a complex disorder that can be broken down into 3 categories: difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, and early morning waking with inability to return to sleep. Also, a person may present with a combination of two or more of these categories. Diagnosis is subjective and can differ for each patient. Regardless of the type of insomnia, many cases of sleeplessness are due to several factors. These include irregular sleeping/waking schedule, mental disturbances, physical disturbances, and drug/alcohol intake.

To the acupuncturist, a multitude of treatment protocols exist depending on tongue, pulse, signs, and symptoms. The focus here is on a common type of insomnia, one due to anxiety paired with obsessive thinking. Sufferers usually complain that they are “stressed out” about something pressing in their work or personal life.

Anxiety with overthinking can cause repetitive recurring thoughts, increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and shallow breathing. With this type of insomnia, one TCM treatment approach is to calm the *shen*/mind, descend *qi* from the head, and clear heat.

The treatment protocol presented here is balanced and needles the extremities. In doing so, the *qi* is led away from the head and courses through the entire body.

Acupuncture Points:

Ear Point Zero: Nogier's point to stimulate parasympathetic nervous system

An Mian: As the name translates, induces peaceful sleep

CV-14: Unbind the chest, descend *qi*, calms Heart *shen*

LR-3 directed towards KIDNEY1: Anchor the *qi* and drain excess from the head

HT-7: Calm *shen* and clear excess or deficiency Heart heat

All points are needled bilaterally and stimulated until *de qi*, using #34 (0.22mm) needles used for body points and #36 (0.20mm) needles for ear points. Treatment is 3 times weekly and needles are retained for 20 minutes per session.

References:

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Tietao D and Ergil K. Practical diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1999. Print.

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