

## Chinese Medicine and Insomnia

The goal of sleeping pills is to make you sleep (more or less regardless of the cause.) The goal of Chinese Medicine is to correct the imbalance that is causing you to have insomnia in the first place. That might sound pretty subtle, but it makes a world of difference in treatment and results. Insomnia is an internal imbalance that is affecting your brain, and it must be corrected if you ever want to sleep without sleeping pills.

### **Causes of Insomnia**

To cure your insomnia, you must stop the insomnia causes (whenever possible) in addition to treating it. You may have temporary insomnia, caused by recent emotional upset or worrying, too much tea or coffee, or being too hot or cold while sleeping. There's only one solution to these causes: stop doing them, and your insomnia will clear up.

The real problem is chronic, long-standing insomnia. These include:

- Worry, anger and/or frustration (especially in young and middle-aged people), or any other type of extended emotional strain
- Overexertion (exerting too much energy at once)
- Mental overwork
- Long work without rest
- Working under stressful conditions or while eating a poor diet
- Excess sex
- Irregular diet
- Over-eating
- Eating too much greasy food
- Eating too much hot (spicy) food
- Childbirth with a large loss of blood
- Residual effect after having a cold or flu

If you have a history of any of those insomnia causes, that's probably where your problem is coming from. In order for your insomnia to improve, these are the issues that need to be addressed.

### **Food Therapy for Insomnia**

There are many dietary habits that can lead to insomnia: irregular eating, overeating, eating late at night, and eating excess greasy and/or hot food. In general, you can say that those habits lead to long-term chemical imbalances in your body.

Eat a diet composed primarily of:

- A large variety of cooked vegetables (fresh and lightly cooked)
- Whole grains (brown rice, buckwheat and millet are all good)
- Animal protein (small amounts, more like a condiment than a main course)
- Water (room temperature)
- Limit most everything else to only small amounts until you are sleeping well (especially dairy, sweets, cold foods, fruit juices and oily-greasy foods.)
- Eat extremely limited amounts of fruit

Also, try to:

- Eat on a regular schedule
- Only eat until you feel about 70% full (in other words, don't over-eat)
- Avoid greasy food
- Avoid too much hot, spicy food

- Refrain from eating near bedtime
- Avoid arguing, discussing business or getting emotional while eating

Diet and insomnia can be very closely related, so if you aren't already eating this way, there's a good chance your insomnia will be eliminated or greatly reduced once you do.

### Home Remedies for Insomnia

- Emotional stress and worry are among the main causes of chronic insomnia. One of the most effective ways to calm your mind is meditation. Plus, it not only calms your mind, but has strong regulating affects on your body.
- Use a hairbrush to tap the soles and sides of your feet for about 5 minutes, particularly the spot just below the ball of your feet right in the center. This has the effect of acupressure/acupuncture and has a calming and regulating effect on your body.
- Put some lavender or jasmine next to your pillow or even in your pillowcase. It's very calming, and can help relax an over-anxious mind.
- Put an open bag of finely sliced ginger or fresh orange or banana peel next to your pillow. These are also very calming.
- Drink one cup of warm, organic milk with honey an hour before bed.
- Drink a cup of cold water with a teaspoon of rice vinegar an hour before bed. (Ordinarily, cold water isn't recommended diet because it hurts your digestion, but as a temporary remedy, you may find this helpful.)
- Eat nut butter, turkey or dates in the evening. These foods are high in tryptophan, which makes you sleepy (But don't eat too close to bedtime. That could keep you awake)
- Use hops, skullcap, valerian root or kava kava (all in capsule or extract form). Rotate among these herbs, rather than using the same on every night. Take before bed.
- A hot bath (not shower) an hour before bedtime will relax you and make you sleepy.
- Chamomile or catnip tea. These are mildly sedative and calming to your nerves.
- Exercise regularly, particularly early in the evening, but not just before bedtime.
- Avoid computer work, thinking about money/business or anything that excites or stimulates you before bed.
- DHEA, a naturally occurring hormone, can give you better sleep.
- Melatonin is another natural hormone that helps promote good quality sleep.
- Use a Calcium-Magnesium supplement. Calcium is calming, and magnesium relaxes the muscles and is required with calcium.
- Use your bedroom only for sleeping (and sex). Your subconscious will eventually associate it with sleeping.

### Acupressure for Insomnia

Apply medium pressure to cause an "achy" feel (never painful), for a minimum 60 seconds / 3 X day:

- **HT 7** - On the crease of your wrist, on the little finger side, in the depression just medial to the tendon.
- **KI 3** - On the inside of your ankle, between the big protruding bone and your Achilles tendon.
- **SP 6** - On the inside of your lower leg, approximately 3 inches up from the big protruding bone at your ankle, just behind the shinbone.

