

Here's some interesting stats about insomnia. 850 million people worldwide suffer from chronic insomnia. And then 8% of them. Have severe insomnia where they don't sleep at all for weeks on end. Another stat that was interesting is women are twice as much inclined to get insomnia than men. So we as women get more affected by it.

So today I'm gonna share with you how we can address chronic insomnia with Chinese medicine and acupuncture. We're gonna look at the most common patterns, acupuncture points, formulas. We're also gonna talk about diet, sleep hygiene and supplements. And stay till the end because I'm also going to have also a couple of hacks that can help our patients when we're not really sure of the diagnosis.

And they work really well in clinic because I've done this since 2003. So are you ready? Let's do this.

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I am your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students and like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture because after all, acupuncture rocks.

Before we start talking about TCM and what it can do for insomnia, let's talk about the Western view. First of all, what qualifies as insomnia?

We understand that sometimes we don't sleep well. I know when I travel and then I have to take a plane at 7:00 AM the next morning. I'm not gonna sleep well 'cause I gotta make sure I wake up and not miss the plane. Or if I'm excited about something, definitely I don't sleep well. Or if you are a student, you know, the night before exams, usually we don't sleep very well.

Right. Or if you have an event that's coming up and you're anxious about it, that might create some acute insomnia. However, to qualify as chronic insomnia, it has to be at least three times a week where the person does not sleep well, wakes up a lot, and has a disturbed sleep for at least a month.

Now we're talking about chronic insomnia. Now, for some people that could be three months, six months, a year, or years. I've had patients saying to me, I haven't slept well in years. They're so used to not sleeping well.

It's their new normal. We wanna really change that and educate patients that it's so important to sleep, to recover from the day's activity, and to be able to continue to enjoy life and not be affected by the missing link in our health.

When it comes to western medicine, treatments are usually medication over the counter or prescribed antidepressant. Anti-anxiety medications often are prescribed as well. Sometimes doctors may say melatonin is a good idea, take some now. It's really interesting 'cause melatonin doesn't work for everyone.

Melatonin I found can work really well when we're jet lag. If I go to Europe and I'm nine hours off my regular time and I'm not really sleepy when it's time to go to bed or I fall asleep at 5:00 PM and then I wake up at 2:00 AM that doesn't work right.

So usually taking a few drops of melatonin for the first three days that we are in a different time zones works really well for us.

I just listened to a podcast recently on the diary of CEO and the guest there is. A science-based sleep specialist, and I will have the link for you below because I absolutely love this episode.

Everything he was saying was very connected to Chinese medicine. He was saying that the best quality sleep is between 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

That's exactly what TCM says as well. He was also talking about the quality of sleep, the quantity of sleep, and something that was very interesting. He said, you know, a lot of people don't sleep enough during the week because they have so many things to do. And then they say, I'll catch up on the weekend and we think that we can catch up on the weekend.

And he said, that doesn't work. They did a lot of study on this and you cannot catch up. Meaning that if you sleep 10 hours, two nights on the weekend, but you sleep five hours or four hours during the week, it is not gonna be beneficial. Interesting. Right. So I'll have the link for you below. And it actually gave me the idea to create this content for you On insomnia,

What are the common contributors to not sleeping well? Stress, pain medication, caffeine, alcohol, diet, sleep apnea. Of course, restless leg syndrome, menopause for a lot of women having night sweats and hot flashes will wake them up.

Of course, depression, anxiety also for people that have a poor sleep environment. ,

If you sleep next to someone that snores really loud or you have a room that's too hot or too bright because you live in an apartment that has a lot of light or like a lot of people, you are on your device just before going to sleep, and that blue light is not the best.

Because it creates havoc on the circadian rhythm. Your body needs to know that it's nighttime.

Another risk factor is shift workers. I have a lot of nurses and firemen that I see as patients, and they all have health issues because the rhythm, the circadian rhythm, is all at whack.

They work 12 hours at night for three days in a row, and then they try to get back to a normal rhythm by not. Sleeping during the day, but sleeping at night and it goes back and forth like this and it's so disruptive to their whole entire health. So that is a big risk factor for insomnia because it's very hard for the body to go to bed during the daytime, even though you may put a mask on your face, the body knows outside.

It is bright.

And there's a couple of more, like family history or genetics that can contribute to insomnia and of course as we age, people have a tendency to sleep less and less. I know when people turns 50 60, they're like, oh, now I only sleep for six hours and 70, you sleep less. If they have urinary incontinence or issue with needing to get up at night to urinate, then their sleep is interrupted, and then they have chronic insomnia because they're up and down all night.

So lots of contributors, lots of risks, factors can lead to insomnia.

I wanna share a quick story with you. When I was a TCM student in my class, there was this student that had insomnia and we became friends and we started talking and suddenly he's telling me he doesn't sleep at all. And I couldn't quite compute that. What do you mean you don't sleep at all?

He's like, I haven't slept in a full night's sleep in months, and I don't sleep at all. And I'm like. How do you function? How do you study? How do you survive if you don't sleep at all? And he's like, I lay there for a few hours and then I just read and do other things and I study. So he was really good because he studied all night, but he couldn't sleep.

And then I said, well, why don't we go to the student's clinic and see what happens?

And my favorite teacher gave him herbs and we did acupuncture on him. He had heart fire, like really a lot of heart fire, and he was always walking fast, talking fast. Very, very hyper kind of personality.

So she gave him herbs that are very grounding and have animal parts in them, like oyster shells. And then he did acupuncture three times a week. And within seven weeks he was sleeping a full night. His anxiety had come down 'cause he had really high anxiety. It was fantastic to see. I loved it. And that teacher was one of my favorite one, because every time she treated someone, they got better.

So I always, always listened and paid attention to everything she shared because she totally rocked it.

Now let's talk about the consequences, right? Because the idea is it's not just that you're gonna get tired and look for caffeine and look to have sugar or food that is gonna keep you awake from being fatigued all day.

It's also the fact that is going to deplete the immune system so the person's gonna get sick more. And if you look at the five element theory, it makes sense because when we look at the sequence, were fire. Controls metal. Then if there is no sleep, it is going to overpower the immune system or metal or the lung and large intestine, and the immune system is gonna get depleted.

The consequences also, it's gonna affect the cardiovascular system. It increased the risk of stroke, of heart attack of high blood pressure, mood disorders, depression, anxiety, it affects so many systems.

This is why I feel that Chinese medicine is so good with mental health and insomnia is one of the thing that we can treat. And it's not just about heart. Seven. Although Heart seven is one of the best point for insomnia.

Now we're gonna look at the TCM views. Let's start with ear acupuncture, one of my favorite microsystem.

When it comes to insomnia, we wanna do shen men sympathetic sub cortex, and then we're gonna do heart, spleen, liver, and kidney.

Now you don't have to do them all. If the person was anxious, I would do more heart and spleen. Forget the kidney and the liver. Definitely do shen men sympathetic and sub cortex. If the person who is more stressed, then I would do more liver heart.

And if the person had phobia or massive anxiety for years, maybe heart and kidney, if they're going through menopause for example, would be a good combination. Does that make sense? So you don't have to do them all, but at least five points would work really well.

Now let's look at the most common patterns when it comes to insomnia. One that I see the most in clinical practice is heart and spleen Qi and blood deficiency.

The main symptoms is the person cannot fall asleep. It takes them two to three hours to fall asleep. They overthink, they're anxious once they fall asleep. They usually stay asleep, but sometimes they're easily awakened. If there's a little noise or something happening, they worry a lot. Of course, they have palpitations, poor memory, and this is a poor memory where you read the same thing over and over and over and you can't remember what you read.

Poor appetite, meaning that they're not hungry in the morning, but they get hungry as the day goes and they eat at irregular meals. They can have loose stools if the spleen qi deficiency is very pronounced, but they could also have constipation.

If there's more blood deficiency. They're definitely fatigued and they have pale face, pale lips, and pale tongue, and a weak pulse or a weak choppy pulse. If there's more blood deficiency versus qi deficiency.

The best formula for this is Gui Pi Tang. The best points to nourish qi and blood of the spleen and heart is bladder 17, bladder 15, bladder 20 backhoe, points of heart and spleen. Spleen six, of course, stomach 36, I love Stomach 36 for this 'cause it's one of the only point that tonify both Qi and blood. Of course we wanna do heart seven. We can add up Anmian because if we're doing a back treatment, that would be a perfect idea as well.

If you still struggle to come up with the right treatment protocol for your patients, you are going to love my third book by Popular Demand. I have created a guide for TCM treatments for over 160 common syndromes with acupuncture points, herbal formula, ear points, diet, and so much more, including many, many of my clinical pearls.

It is the game changer for acupuncture students and specifically for practitioners. You can download the digital version on any device and it comes with many video links to complement it or. If you are like me and you'd rather have a hard copy version, the publisher ships it all over the world. But before you invest in my Chinese medicine, treatments made easy, I wanna make sure it's everything you were looking for so you can download a sample of it.

Listen to what people who invest in this book had to say, thank you, Clara. This is exactly what I needed. I love how you organized this book. It's truly helping me in my first year in practice. Yay. So excited. Bought it immediately. It will be a great resource for studying for boards. That's awesome. Oh my God.

I immediately purchased this, and it is such a bargain price that I almost feel ashamed for paying what I believe is worth of much, much more. Even as an experienced practitioner for over 10 years, I like your stuff just as much in benefit from it. Yay. All this is just so rewarding for me, so I hope you get your copy.

If you don't have one, the link is in the show notes below, or you can go to my website acuproacademy.com and click the shop tab on the menu bar. You won't regret it. I put so much heart and soul in it. I hope you enjoy it and benefit from it, and in turn, your patients do as well.

The next one is liver blood and liver yin deficiency. So this person is going to wake up at liver time, meaning between one and 3:00 AM they're gonna be very restless, very agitated.

They're gonna have maybe night sweat. This is when the menopausal perimenopausal starts to happen. They're going to fall back asleep, but then wake up a few more times and fall back asleep. They'll have usually pale nails. But they may have red cheeks because of the yin deficiency. If the yin deficiency is not super pronounced, then they may not have it yet.

They will have dry mouth specifically at night. They'll be very irritable, very stressed. The tongue's gonna be pale with red sides, and it's gonna be dry because there's yin deficiency and blood deficiency, the pulse may be choppy, thin, rapid.

The best formula for this is Suan Zao Ren Tang and the acupuncture point would be, again, we could do heart seven, we could still do Anmian.

And then we wanna do bladder 47, bladder 18, bladder 17, spleen six. Again, we could still do stomach 36 if we want to, but if we do a back treatment, it's really hard to do all of those. So we are gonna do liver eight. To tonify, liver, blood, and of course kidney three or kidney six to tonify yin deficiency.

However, you don't have to put kidney three or kidney six, 'cause spleen six will address the blood and the yin deficiency. So if you want less points, which is always my way of treating, then you don't have to do that point. Make sense?

When it comes to liver fire versus liver, yang rising, this always affect the patient as well. Both are going to wake up between 1:00 and 3:00 AM and then if it's liver Yang rising, the patient's gonna fall back asleep eventually. If it's liver fire. They will not fall back asleep at all.

So that's the difference there. Right. And then of course they both gonna be stressed, very irritable with the liver fire. It's gonna come to anger like worse than liver, yang, rising, they both going to sigh a lot. Maybe have red eyes, specifically bloodshot eyes if they have insomnia for a long time, they're gonna have tempero headaches, maybe dizziness, if it's liver yang rising, they'll have a red sides of the tongue. If it's liver fire, they're gonna have red tongue with a yellow coat and very dry.

The pulse is gonna be wiry rapid, so they're very close to each other. Liver fire might create some high blood pressure while liver. Yang rising, you know, often comes back down if there's less stress. While liver fire is kinda like a permanent chronic issues, the best formula for liver fire is long down, shake down tongue.

This is very cold so I wouldn't give this for a long time. We wanna bring that liver, fire liver yang down. So we still are gonna do heart seven, but now we can do. Liver three. Liver two. Liver two brings liver yang down. We could do kidney one to bring the fire down. Specifically if there was high blood pressure.

We can do gallbladder 43 for temporal headaches specifically due to excess heat or excess fire. We could do gallbladder 20 if there was dizziness or high blood pressure. Again, you're gonna have to decide if you wanna do a front treatment. Or back treatment. This is just the guide, right?

Have you signed up to my weekly newsletter yet? It's completely free and I share exclusive content. I don't share anywhere else. I do case studies. I compare points and I provide so much value. If you're not on it yet, the link is below for you. What are you waiting for?

One that's interesting is stomach food stagnation. This is for people that constantly overeat late at night, and so that creates some issue because we're not supposed to eat before we go to bed, right? And they'll have big meals late at night. I have patients that basically don't eat all day and have a massive meal at 8:00 PM and continue to watch TV and eat popcorn or chips.

At 10:00 PM so now we have insomnia with indigestion. So the person's gonna wake up in the night with heartburn, pain in the stomach area, fullness, feeling bloating, nauseated

even, and having acid reflux. That makes sense, right? So the cause here is easy to figure out, and it's easy to prevent by educating the patients that they need to stop eating by 7:00 PM if they go to bed, let's say at 10, and not a heavy, heavy meal.

Every time we have a big dinner or Christmas dinner, we feel like, oh, that was too much, and it's hard to sleep. Right? Makes sense. That's once in a while, but some people do this on a chronic basis every day.

The tongue is gonna have a thick, greasy coat, and the pulse is gonna be slippery. A really easy formula is BHO one. BHO one is kinda like the digestive enzymes formula, so it helps in digestion. But again. The best thing to do is not to eat big meals late at night.

We can do points like re 10, re 12, of course, to kind of help the stomach. Liver 13 T help the stomach and the spleen 'cause that's the front mo point of the spleen. Stomach 36, spleen six, pericardium six for the nausea, the heartburn, we could do re 17 because it's also for the heartburn, the acid reflux.

But I would reinforce again that we just need to change the lifestyle habits

Another one that I see a lot in practice is heart fire. Now, this is the one that I was talking about with the students in my class that had heart fire. You had insomnia where you didn't sleep at all. This can happen a lot with people with schizophrenia or bipolar.

When they are in a manic state, they don't sleep at all. So they're so agitated. Their mind is agitated. They have a restless body. They're thirsty for cold drink. Of course, they feel really hot. In general.

They can also have canker sores in the mouth or on the tongue. They have a really red tongue with a red tip and a full rapid pulse. They're very, very restless. They walk fast, they talk fast. Just like I described earlier with the students that was in my class, now there's a formula for this called we can Add a lan.

It's a single herb to really calm the mind. We wanna do heart seven and lan, but now we wanna bring that heart. Fire down. So Heart eight is one of the best point for that. Pericardium nine. We could bleed Pericardium nine to bring that fire down.

Stomach 44, the best point to clear Fire in general, and we could do any points to calm that mine. We could also do kidney one.

There are a lot more patterns, but I just wanted to give you the common one that we see the most in practice. If you want all the patterns and everything that I share when it comes to insomnia, you can find all this in my blue book, TCM Treatment Made Easy. It covers over 160 syndromes just like I did with the insomnia here with.

Acupuncture, acupuncture point, formula, diet, and so much more. If you don't have your copy yet, it ships all over the world. Or if you'd rather have the PDF version, it can be downloaded on all your devices and it comes with video links to complement it.

The link is below for you.

Now let's talk about TCM nutrition. Of course, we can recommend food specific to each patient's TCM pattern of diagnosis, but there are rules that are going to apply to everyone

Number one, no caffeine or sugar after 2:00 PM because that will affect the sleep.

Two, avoiding big meals at night and stopping to eat three hours before sleep.

Three, no alcohol, specifically for patients with liver, young rising or liver fire, even for the yin deficiency, perimenopause menopausal woman, because it is going to affect the sleep,

we can also recommend to increase the magnesium rich food like nuts and seeds or tripe. Protein sources like Turkey and eggs.

When it comes to supplement, magnesium glycinate is the best one to kind of calm the mind, so that's a good one to take. L-theanine has also been shown to help when it comes to sleep.

And then of course you can recommend teas like valerian root camo, mal lavender. For some people that helps. I have to share something with you. I never liked the taste of Kamo mal. I don't like it. I don't know why. People who love to drink that, it tastes funny to me for some reason. But what's interesting about camo mal side note is that it's from the same family of.

Kinia or ragweed. So if the patient has ragweed allergies, then it's going to create more issue because chamomile and kinesia also are from the same family that creates hay fever. Little side note that you know, herbs are not without side effects.

And before I finish with my last acupuncture hack to help your patient sleep better, even if you're not sure of your diagnosis. Let's talk about sleep hygiene recommendation.

First. Consistent sleep and wake up schedule. Even on the weekends. Going to bed every day at the same time and waking up at the same time.

Second, creating a routine at night to wind down. So 30 to 60 minutes before bed, doing something that's gonna come to mind, not streaming some true crime or gory show. That is a big no no. Taking an Epsom salt bath would be great or a nice warm shower before going to bed reading something that is very calming.

Maybe meditating or doing some light stretches

Three. Limiting the blue light exposure, meaning read a real book. Don't be on your phone. What I recommend to patients is. Take that phone and put it away from your bed maybe in another room. I know that's really hard for people and have an alarm, you know, a real alarm, like the old time to wake you up if you need to.

But if the phone is right there, what do people do? It's the last thing they do before they go to bed. It's the first thing they do when they wake up. That's another thing. It's really important in the morning when we wake up, to allow the eyes to adjust to the light, the natural light, not the phone light.

So it should not be the first thing we look at in the morning because that will affect the sleep later on.

I love a room that's cool. At night, I have my big duvet. I'm in Canada all the way up, but my room is cool and often we have the window open so you can breathe fresh air, and yet you are cozy inside your blanket.

That for me, is the best sleep.

Make sure you tell your patients that insomnia is not just an inconvenience. It's actually a really serious issue that can affect patient and their health entirely, right? We wanna also set expectation that if they had insomnia for three, four years, one session's, probably not gonna do it. We're gonna have to be consistent.

And so this is why we're gonna encourage to say we're working as a team. You do your part, and I'll do mine.

Meaning we wanna make sure that patients understand that the education we're giving them about sleep rituals should be followed the best they can in order to support the

treatment we do. We work as a team, not us doing the work and them expecting results. Make sense?

Now let's talk about the little hacks we can use if we are not sure of our diagnosis in TCM. First of all, the Buddhist triangle.

The Buddhist triangle is a long nine, heart seven and pericardium six forming a triangle on the wrist, and that is really useful for insomnia, depression, anxiety. Often people ask me, do you do it bilaterally? I usually do, if that's the treatment. Purpose. If the treatment purpose is the person's coming for fertility and they don't sleep well, sleep is important for the reproductive system as well.

But if I focus on fertility, . I might just do the Buddha Triangle on one side and I will pair it with three points on the ankle, which would be spleen six, kidney six, and kidney three.

That is a really good combination for reproductive system and insomnia.

The second one I wanted to say, if someone comes in and they have cortisol level issue, which means that they are really tired in the morning, so their cortisol level is way down and they are really wired at night.

Their cortisol level is way up. So patients will say, I am exhausted. Physically, I go to bed and I can't fall asleep because my mind is active. So this is a cortisol level issue where it's too low in the morning and too high in the evening. We can do points to put the patient in a parasympathetic state, of course, but what we wanna do is do 20, the highest point on the body, combine with the lowest.

Point, which is kidney one. So kidney one's gonna bring that mind shadow in the head down and do 20 is gonna lift the energy but still not lift the mind. So do 20 kidney one. Great combo when the person is really fatigued but cannot fall asleep.

And the last one is combining anion, the extra point that's best for insomnia heart. Seven. The best point for insomnia

with stomach 40. When the person gets woken up by a lot of dreams, their mind is active, too many dreams. Maybe Nightmares, maybe not, but the dreams are really disturbing the sleep, so lan, heart seven and Stomach 40 is a great combo when there is dream disturbed sleep.

As I mentioned when we first started, insomnia affects millions of people and sometimes patients come and see us, not necessarily for insomnia, but we discover when we ask our questions that they don't sleep well for years.

So now we can educate them and we can also support them and help them sleep better.

So I hope you have a beautiful night's sleep tonight and you wake up rested.

If not, you can also massage heart seven before you go to bed just to calm the mind.

Have a fantastic day. Keep rocking it using TCM because after all, acupuncture rocks.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode, and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well. Follow the show, live a review, and if you want more, go to my website, acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more.

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