



# Insomnia

## Oh to sleep a thousand peaceful sleeps!

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) there are “three treasures” of our body: **Qi - energy; Jing - essence/constitution; and Shen - spirit and mind.**

These days we generally all place many stresses on our bodies and minds. Insomnia occurs when the Shen has been disturbed. Every stress we place on our body can disturb our Shen: work tension and worry, , fatigue, spicy food, excessive alcohol, caffeine and other stimulating substances. Insomnia is probably the most common symptom of Shen disturbance.

Because there are different causes of insomnia, many people find generic herbal formulas or prescription drugs to be an ineffective treatment. In TCM, insomnia is often related to two different body patterns:

1. Hot and sweaty restlessness; and
2. Racing anxious mind.

### Hot & Sweaty Restlessness

The liver purifies the blood and according to TCM is closely linked to our emotional state. If someone has constant stress or worry, the liver will be placed under pressure and will create internal heat. Often stress can lead to increased consumption of alcohol or an unhealthy diet, which then places the liver under more pressure.

At night the body's systems should be resting, which is why our core temperature drops when we sleep. Internal liver heat will not allow the body to cool at night and will cause stuffiness, sweating and agitation. These symptoms can cause disturbed sleep and insomnia. If this body pattern is not treated properly and the insomnia continues for a long period it's not uncommon for chronic fatigue or depression to develop.

### Racing Anxious Mind

In TCM the heart not only houses the mind, it also governs the blood (which is a similar function to western medicine) and has a direct link with mental health. If someone has been drained of energy - due to malnourishment, physical activity or excessive worry - the heart energy will become depleted. This is known as a heart Qi deficiency and will cause the mind to wander and thoughts can race around without making much sense. The racing anxious mind is quite common at night where there are few distractions. Other symptoms can be memory loss, heart palpitations and lack of concentration. To combat this it is crucial to maintain a healthy diet. If the digestive system is healthy it will minimise the stress on the body, allowing the heart to function properly and keep the mind calm.

### TCM Treatment

Both types of insomnia can be treated with TCM. **Acupuncture, cupping and massage** treatment will spontaneously calm the body and mind. Individually prescribed **herbs** will effectively create a deep change by supporting balance of body and reducing pressure on the organ system, which will calm the mind.

### Some Mindful Calming Tips:

- Focus on the breath. Breathe deeply in through the nose and out through the mouth, count 10 breaths.
- Avoid hot and spicy food and alcohol, especially in the evenings.
- Don't eat large meals late into the evenings; the digestive process will disturb the body and make it harder for it to switch off and relax.
- Avoid caffeine, especially after midday.
- If it is the middle of the night and you are having problems sleeping, don't panic you can always get a TCM treatment tomorrow, which will help you catch up on sleep the following night.