

ACUPRESSURE FOR INSOMNIA

In today's non-stop world, anxiety and stress have become common companions for many of us. Whether it's the pressures of work, family, or just trying to keep up with life, it's no wonder sleep can be so elusive.

When we are stressed, our body puts on the "fight or flight" mode and releases hormones such as cortisol that keep us active and prepared for action.

Though necessary for immediate danger, this perpetual state of heightened vigilance makes it virtually impossible to relax at night. Our sympathetic nervous system remains hyper-aroused, keeping us from the deeper relaxation required to fall asleep and remain asleep. This negative cycle tends to keep us drained, cranky, and yet more stressed out, creating a tough cycle to escape.

But an ancient Chinese practice is gaining popularity as a natural way to find calm and improve sleep.

This is where *acupuncture* and *acupressure* provide strong, natural answers as integrated methods for balancing your mind and body. They soothe the nervous system, lower levels of cortisol, and stimulate the release of endorphins – the body's natural painkillers and mood boosters. This process assists in transitioning your body from "fight or flight" to a more relaxing "rest and digest" mode so your body and mind are ready for restful sleep.

WHAT IS ACUPUNCTURE?

Acupuncture is becoming well known in medical circles these days. It involves the insertion of very thin needles into specific points on the body, known as acupuncture points or acupoints to promote healing and balance. These points are believed to be connected by pathways called meridians, through which the energy, or "qi", flows. The goal of acupuncture is to restore the flow of qi, thus restoring homeostasis, or balance, to the body which is essential for good health.

Acupuncture is commonly used to treat a variety of conditions, including:

- Chronic pain: Such as back pain, neck pain, and migraines.
- Stress and anxiety: It may help in managing stress and promoting relaxation.

- Digestive issues: Including nausea and vomiting related to chemotherapy or surgery.
- Insomnia: By calming anxiety and soothing pain, the body can naturally relax into restful sleep

Both *acupuncture* and *acupressure* are key concepts of Chinese Traditional Medicine which states there are invisible meridian lines, or pathways, which run through the whole body. Each meridian is connected to a specific organ and by stimulating important points on the meridian, it can release energy - or “Qi” - to that specific organ allowing it to heal. Chinese doctors use these to heal various diseases and disorders, but they can be used as an energy boost for healthy people too.

Acupressure is similar to acupuncture except we use our fingers to stimulate the points instead of needles. *The health benefits and the points used are exactly the same.*

The great advantage is that this can be done at home. The only drawback with acupressure is that we can only stimulate one point at a time, whereas acupuncture can combine multiple points at a time.

This isn't a huge problem, however. For combination points, simply apply pressure to the points one after the other and you will still receive the same benefits.

Clinical studies suggest acupressure can be effective in treating chronic insomnia by addressing both physical and emotional causes. Many people report deeper, more restful sleep after just a few sessions. It can help regulate your sleep-wake cycle and reduce night-time awakenings.

Ready to try this? You can stimulate the points by pressing and holding for up to 30 seconds, pressing and releasing or pressing or tapping gently on the point/s.

We'll start with the single points and then illustrate the combination points.

These points are not in order of effectiveness, Some people find certain points more efficient than others, so just try them all and see which work best for you.

I've provided illustrations throughout of the points we'll be working with. Most of these can be used on their own, but they're super effective when combined. The actual point is illustrated by a small brown dot on the actual part of the body.

HEART 6



Many of the insomnia points are on the heart meridian. This is because the heart meridian plays a role in maintaining physical, emotional, and mental well-being. **Heart 6** (H6) is about 1 thumb width below the small bone at the end of the wrist.

H6 point is useful for women experiencing menopausal hot flashes, especially night sweats, as it cools heat in the blood.

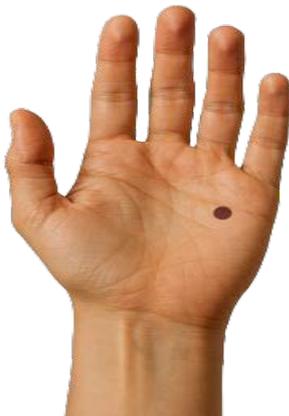
HEART 7

Heart 7 (H7) is considered one of the major points in acupressure. It's a good point for anxiety and insomnia that's caused by anxiety and stress. It's located just below the wrist bone below the little finger, on the wrist crease.

H7 is also a good point for those who suffer from depression and it regulates and strengthens the heart.



HEART 8



for emergencies.

To locate **Heart 8** (H8), we're moving up into the palm of the hand. Move one and a half thumb widths down between the fourth and fifth fingers.

H8 treats a condition called "*heart fire*". This is described as extreme irritability. It's also used for chronic insomnia.

H8 can be a fast acting pressure point so it's good

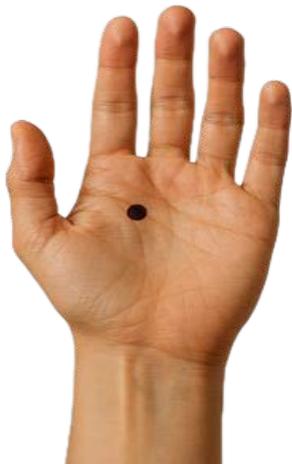
PERICARDIUM 6

We're moving onto a different meridian; the pericardium. This meridian protects the heart and regulates emotional wellbeing. **Pericardium 6** (PC6) is a major point and addresses many health issues. For our purposes it's known as the "insomnia point". It's located three finger widths below the wrist crease, between the tendons in the middle of the forearm.

PC 6 is also useful if you're feeling nauseous for any reason as it also regulates the stomach.



PERICARDIUM 8



Pericardium 8 (PC8) is located on the palm of the hand between the first and second fingers. An easy way to find PC8 is to clench your fist. PC8 is just below the tip of the middle finger.

NOTE

This point isn't used on its own, but together with other points in combination (below).

SPLEEN 6

Here we're jumping to another meridian, the spleen meridian. This meridian deals mainly with emotional balancing.

Spleen 6 (SP6) is located 4 fingers above the inner ankle bone. It is another major point, and possibly the most used point in acupuncture.

SP6 is used to calm whirling thoughts and emotions that can keep you awake.



KIDNEY 1



The kidney meridian plays a part in emotional wellbeing.

Kidney 1 (K1) is located on the sole of the foot on the depression made when the foot is flexed, at the top third of the sole.

K1 is used for insomnia, anxiety and headaches. It lowers excess energy by pulling energy from the head downwards.

The best way to access K1 is to gently roll your foot over a tennis ball. This is best done before getting into bed.

DU MAI 24

The Du Mai meridian is the main meridian that runs up the front of the body, connecting the various organ systems. Du Mai 24 (DU24) is a good point for insomnia as it is easy to access.

DU24 is located around 1 finger width above the hairline in the center of the face.

DU24 is also used to clear a blocked nose and for dizziness and palpitations.



THIRD EYE POINT



The third eye point (GV24.5) is also found on the Du Mai meridian. It's located right between the eyebrows where the nose meets the forehead. This is my favorite point for insomnia, mainly because it's so easy to access and it works well.

GV24.5 resets sleep cycles that are out of balance and will also clear sinuses.

COMBINATION POINTS

Now we come to the combination points. Try these when one point on it's own isn't doing the trick. Reference the pictures above to locate the points. Work on one point before moving on to the next.

HT6 + HT7 - This combination is especially useful for those going through menopause. It alleviates night sweats and also anxiety.

HT7 + HT8 – This combination works well for insomnia due to anxiety.

K1 + SP 6+ HT7 – This triple combination is just for insomnia – when you can't sleep, but you're not sure why.

K1+ PC8 – Another one for insomnia due to anxiety. Here is where the pericardium 8 comes into play.