

Insomnia

Restoring healthy, restorative sleep with acupuncture

WHAT IS INSOMNIA?

Insomnia — difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking too early — affects an estimated 10–30% of adults chronically and up to 50% of adults at some point in their lives. Beyond fatigue, poor sleep is linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, depression, and impaired immune function. Insomnia is often multi-factorial, involving stress, pain, hormonal shifts, and learned sleep-interfering behaviors.

HOW CAN ACUPUNCTURE HELP?

- Increases nighttime melatonin secretion and regulates circadian rhythm disruptions — effects documented in several controlled trials measuring urinary melatonin metabolites.
- Elevates GABA levels in the brain, producing a sedative effect that reduces sleep onset latency (the time it takes to fall asleep) and increases total sleep time.
- A meta-analysis in *Sleep Medicine Reviews* (2019, 30 RCTs) found acupuncture significantly improved sleep quality scores (PSQI) compared to no treatment and some hypnotic medications, with a favorable safety profile.
- Addresses underlying contributors to insomnia — including chronic pain, anxiety, and menopause-related night sweats — rather than treating the symptom in isolation.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Treatments for insomnia typically involve fine needles at calming points on the scalp, wrists, ankles, and ears. Sessions often induce immediate drowsiness. Most patients notice improvements in sleep onset and quality within 3–5 sessions. A standard course is 8–10 treatments over 4–6 weeks. Your practitioner may combine needling with auricular (ear) acupuncture for ongoing support between visits, and will likely discuss sleep hygiene practices that complement your treatment.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PRACTITIONER

- 1 Which type of insomnia do you think I have — difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or early waking — and does that affect your approach?
- 2 Can I use acupuncture alongside my current sleep medication while I transition off it?
- 3 Are there specific times of day I should schedule sessions to best support my sleep that night?

