

## ***Is a Good Night's Sleep Merely a Dream?***

*Do you have a difficult time falling asleep? Do you wake up too early or often during the night? Do you find yourself feeling excessively tired throughout the day? Most people will experience symptoms of insomnia at some point in their lives. Typical symptoms include:*

- difficulty falling sleep*
- waking up frequently during the night*
- difficulty returning to sleep*
- waking up too early in the morning*
- restless sleep*
- not feeling refreshed in the morning*

*As a result insomnia can cause daytime sleepiness, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and a weakened immune system. When taken to an extreme insomnia and the resultant exhaustion can be dangerous when driving a vehicle, operating machinery or when performing other tasks that require full attention and concentration.*

### ***Natural Sleep Solutions***

*What you eat and drink during the day can affect your sleep at night. Too much caffeine, smoking, or consumption of alcohol before bed can contribute to poor sleep. Additionally, some prescription medications can interfere with sleep. Ironically, if not managed carefully or if stopped abruptly, even sleep medications can cause rebound insomnia.*

*The conditions in your sleeping environment can also contribute to nighttime restlessness. Your room may be too bright or excessive noise during your sleep hours may be waking you frequently. A quiet, dark, cool environment with a comfortable bed is best for a good nights sleep.*

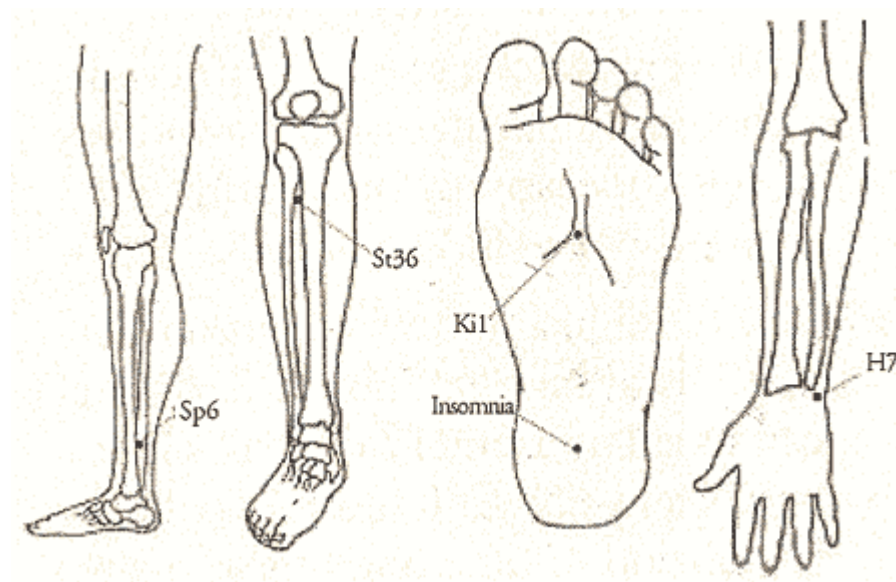
*Too much stimulating activity before bed, vigorous exercise or watching violent or tension filled stories and images on the nightly news, can make it hard to sleep. It is best to plan for quiet, non-stressful activities for at least 60 minutes prior to your regular sleep time. Reading or listening to relaxing music is a good way to quiet your mind.*

*Shift-work, modified weekend sleep habits and frequent late nights create variability in sleep routines. Keeping routine times for going to bed and waking each morning even on weekends, if possible, encourages your brain to develop a sleep pattern routine and promotes better quality sleep.*

*Life stress, such as a new job, family conflict or financial worries can keep you up at night. Certain medical conditions can cause sleeplessness as a common symptom. Chronic pain may also be keeping you awake. You might find it very difficult to wind down at the end of the day. Relaxation and stress management techniques can help quiet your mind and improve your sleep. These techniques do require some practice*

and time to perfect, but the benefits are better sleep and better health without the side effects of sleep medications. Relaxation techniques that have proven effective for many people include **Biofeedback, Hypnotherapy, Yoga, Music Therapy and Meditation**. Consulting a professional or taking a class in one of these areas to learn proper techniques can be beneficial and can accelerate your learning.

**Acupressure Points for Insomnia:** This powerful technique can provide immediate insomnia relief, yet it costs nothing and takes only a few minutes. Applying pressure on the correct points can help balance and calm your heart, alleviate anxiety, and promote sound sleep. Just place several fingers over the area of the point and hold the point with a firm steady pressure for one minute. Complete on both the left and right sides of the body just before going to bed. This technique is also effective for getting back to sleep should you awake during the night.



**Helpful Herbs:** The following herbs can be used during the, or 20-30 minutes before bedtime.

**Chamomile:** Chamomile is a time-honored sedative herb that can be safely used by children and adults alike. Chamomile tea, which is widely available in grocery or health food stores, is commonly used in for insomnia and restlessness combined with irritability, particularly in children. Chamomile oil can also be put in bath water (5-6 drops) to soothe overwrought nerves, diluted to 2% to make excellent massage oil, or used as an inhalant.

**Hops:** In the early 1900s, physicians used hops as a sedative specifically for insomnia due to worry or nerve weakness. It has a long history of use for treatment of sleeplessness, nervousness, and restlessness. Hops pillows are occasionally used for mild insomnia.

**Lavender:** Lavender is a gentle strengthening tonic for the nervous system. A few drops of lavender oil added to a bath before bedtime is recommended for persons with sleep disorders. Additionally, the oil may be used as a compress, or massage oil or simply inhaling it's vapors to alleviate insomnia. , massaged into the skin (use 10 drops essential oil per ounce of vegetable oil), or added to baths (3-10 drops).

**Passion flower:** Herbalists consider passion flower an important herb for alleviation of insomnia caused by mental worry, overwork, or nervous exhaustion. Passion flower is used for minor sleep problems in both children and adults. It is an excellent sedative with no side effects.

**Valerian:** Herbalists use valerian extensively for its sedative action against insomnia, nervousness, and restlessness. It is recommended for people who have difficulty falling asleep because it shortens sleep latency. It also reduces nighttime waking.

**St. John's Wort:** This common yellow-flowered herb from Europe is quickly becoming an important part of modern herbal therapeutics. Scientific studies show that it can help relieve chronic insomnia and mild depression when related to certain brain chemistry imbalances. Allow 2-3 weeks for the full therapeutic effects to develop.

Combinations of these herbs are available in some health food stores or by consulting a Chartered Herbalist who can recommend a single herb or a combination and the proper dose specific to your needs. If you experience sensitivity or other unpleasant symptoms, from using herbs, discontinue use and consult a qualified herbalist for a total program.

**Melatonin:** Melatonin is a human hormone that is increasingly popular as a supplement to promote sound sleep, especially in people who travel between time zones or who work odd or varying hours. People report mixed success with this product; some finding real benefit and others feel no improvement from its use.

**Calcium:** Calcium actually helps the brain use the brain chemical tryptophan in a more productive way, making it produce melatonin faster, which relaxes our brains enough to let us fall into a deep, restful sleep. Many people find taking a good

*quality calcium supplement in the evening to be helpful in promoting a good night sleep.*

*As each person's insomnia is unique not all techniques work for everyone. You may have to experiment to see what works best for you. If these natural and gentle methods don't have you sleeping like a baby, you may need to consult your physician to rule out any underlying medical conditions.*

*Sweet Dreams!*