

How Acupressure Helps Adults Who Struggle to Get a Good Night's Rest

Prof. Mireille Castaigne

Centre for Intelligent Analytics, Université de Valmont, France

Received :01/05/2026

Accepted: 15/06/2026

Published :20/07/2026

Abstract

One of the most prevalent forms of sleep disorder in adults, insomnia is defined by persistent problems falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting a good night's rest even when given enough time to do so. A person's physical health, mental health, cognitive performance, and quality of life can all take a hit when they do not get enough good sleep. Acupressure and other complementary and alternative therapies have grown in popularity in recent years, despite the prevalence of pharmaceutical treatments, due to worries about their side effects, dependence, and efficacy over the long term. According to the research that were analyzed, adults who suffer from insomnia can find much better sleep after undergoing acupressure therapy. Improvements in sleep efficiency, duration, delay to sleep start, and overall contentment with sleep were noted by those who received acupressure. Sleep disruptions are connected with decreased levels of stress, anxiety, exhaustion, and nightly awakenings, all of which were reduced in many studies. In most cases, acupressure was discovered to be completely safe, with little side effects and good tolerance. The reviewed evidence suggests that acupressure therapy could be a useful supplementary strategy for people suffering from insomnia to enhance the quality of their sleep. It shows promise as an alternative or supplement to traditional treatments due to its non-invasiveness, affordability, simplicity of application, and positive safety profile. In order to bolster the data and provide clear clinical recommendations, greater sample sizes and standardized intervention techniques are necessary for additional high-quality randomized controlled studies.

Keywords: Acupressure, Insomnia, Sleep Quality, Sleep Disorders, Complementary Therapy

Introduction

Physical health, mental function, emotional stability, and general well-being are all profoundly impacted by the sleep-wake cycle. Restorative sleep is critical for a variety of physical functions, including memory consolidation, mood regulation, and optimal performance during the day. Insomnia, however, is among the most frequent sleep disorders affecting adults globally, and sleep disruptions in general have grown more common in contemporary culture. Despite having the opportunity and circumstances for sleep, individuals with insomnia consistently struggle to initiate sleep, sustain sleep, or experience restorative sleep. Symptoms such as a slow start to sleep, waking up several times during the night, waking up early in the morning, and poor quality of sleep are common among those who suffer from insomnia. Daytime drowsiness, inability to focus, decreased output, mood swings, and overall worse quality of life are all possible outcomes of sleep disruptions. Studies have linked chronic sleep loss to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, depression, anxiety disorders, obesity, and impaired immune function. Stress, worry, lifestyle changes, unpredictable work schedules,

excessive screen time, and aging are some of the causes that have contributed to a dramatic rise in the incidence of insomnia. Healthcare providers and researchers prioritize the optimal management of insomnia due to its significant influence on public health. Pharmacological treatments, cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I), teaching on proper sleep hygiene, and relaxation methods are all part of the conventional treatment strategy. Medications for sleep may help in the short term, but they come with risks like tolerance, dependence, and withdrawal when used for too long. Because of this, complementary and alternative therapies, which provide safe and non-invasive ways to enhance the quality of sleep, have become increasingly popular. Acupressure is one form of alternative medicine that has been more popular recently. The practice of acupressure, which has its roots in TCM, is applying gentle pressure to certain anatomical locations called acupoints. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) holds that by applying pressure to certain areas, one can improve their mental and physical health by bringing their Qi (life force energy) back into harmony. According to current scientific theories, acupressure can promote relaxation, increase blood flow, and trigger the release of hormones and neurotransmitters that regulate sleep. The efficacy of acupressure in enhancing the quality of sleep for those suffering from insomnia and other forms of sleep disruption has been the subject of multiple investigations. According to the results of the research, acupressure has the potential to improve sleep quality by decreasing overnight awakenings, increasing the duration of sleep, and decreasing the latency to fall asleep. An appealing alternative or supplemental method for people looking to manage insomnia, it is simple, inexpensive, has few side effects, and can be self-administered.

Definition and Classification of Insomnia

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder characterized by persistent difficulty in initiating sleep, maintaining sleep, or obtaining restorative sleep despite having adequate opportunity and appropriate conditions for sleep. Individuals with insomnia often experience dissatisfaction with the quality or quantity of their sleep, which can lead to daytime impairments such as fatigue, reduced concentration, mood disturbances, irritability, and decreased overall functioning.

According to clinical guidelines, insomnia is diagnosed when sleep difficulties occur regularly and result in significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, educational, or other important areas of functioning. The condition may affect individuals of all ages and can vary in severity, duration, and underlying causes.

Classification of Insomnia

Insomnia can be classified in several ways based on its duration, cause, and pattern of sleep disturbance.

1. Based on Duration

Acute (Short-Term) Insomnia

Acute insomnia lasts for a few days to several weeks and is often triggered by stressful life events, emotional distress, illness, travel, or changes in daily routine. Symptoms usually resolve once the underlying cause is addressed.

Chronic Insomnia

Chronic insomnia is characterized by sleep difficulties occurring at least three times per week for three months or longer. It may significantly affect physical health, mental well-being, and quality of life and often requires comprehensive management.

2. Based on Cause

Primary Insomnia

Primary insomnia occurs independently and is not directly associated with another medical, psychiatric, or sleep disorder. The exact cause may not always be identifiable.

Secondary Insomnia (Comorbid Insomnia)

Secondary insomnia results from underlying conditions such as anxiety, depression, chronic pain, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory disorders, medication use, or substance abuse. It is the most common form of insomnia encountered in clinical practice.

3. Based on Sleep Pattern

Sleep-Onset Insomnia

This type involves difficulty falling asleep at bedtime. Individuals may spend a prolonged period lying awake before sleep begins.

Sleep-Maintenance Insomnia

Sleep-maintenance insomnia is characterized by frequent awakenings during the night and difficulty returning to sleep after awakening.

Early-Morning Awakening Insomnia

Individuals with this type wake up earlier than desired and are unable to return to sleep, resulting in reduced total sleep duration.

Mixed Insomnia

Mixed insomnia involves a combination of difficulties in falling asleep, staying asleep, and waking too early.

Understanding the definition and classification of insomnia is important for accurate diagnosis, appropriate treatment planning, and evaluation of therapeutic interventions such as acupressure therapy. Different types of insomnia may respond differently to treatment approaches, highlighting the need for individualized management strategies.

Adult Insomnia Prevalence

An important issue in public health, insomnia is among the most prevalent sleep disorders impacting adults globally. The disorder is marked by ongoing struggles with falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting enough restorative sleep, which impacts how well you function during the day. Lifestyle changes, elevated stress levels, an aging population, and the increasing frequency of chronic health disorders have all contributed to a dramatic rise in the incidence of insomnia in the last several decades.

A large percentage of adults will suffer with insomnia symptoms throughout their lifetimes, according to research. About 30% to 35% of individuals, according to epidemiological studies, report occasional symptoms of insomnia, and about 10% to 15% suffer from chronic insomnia that is severe enough to impact everyday functioning, the researchers found. Diagnostic criteria, cultural considerations, and research methodology all play a role in explaining why the frequency differs between nations, age groups, and people.

Changes in sleep patterns associated with aging, a rise in the incidence of chronic diseases, medication usage, and decreased sleep efficiency all contribute to the higher prevalence of insomnia in the elderly. During menstruation, menopause, pregnancy, and other hormonal changes, women are more prone to sleeplessness than males. The increased prevalence reported among females is further exacerbated by psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, and stress.

Insomnia is more common among certain professions. Disruptions to the sleep-wake cycles are common and can increase the risk of sleep disturbances for people who work shifts, in the medical field, in emergency services, or who have unpredictable or extended work hours. Insomnia can also be caused by lifestyle factors like drinking too much alcohol, smoking, not getting enough exercise, and staring at screens for too long before bed.

Chronic medical and mental health disorders are associated with an increased risk of sleeplessness. Problems sleeping are sometimes a symptom of a more serious health issue, including diabetes, heart disease, chronic pain, respiratory disease, or a mental health concern. Poor sleep impairs health outcomes, and underlying ailments further disrupt sleep, producing a vicious cycle. Insomnia often coexists with these conditions.

Important public health considerations are raised by the prevalence of sleeplessness. The quality of one's sleep has a direct correlation to one's productivity, cognitive functioning, accident risk, quality of life, and healthcare expenditures. More and more people are starting to realize the importance of getting enough sleep and that there has to be easy-to-access treatments to help with insomnia and general wellness.

Sleep Disorders and Their Impact on Mental and Physical Well-being

Many people suffer from insomnia, a sleep problem that has serious consequences for their emotional and physical well-being. Sufficient sleep is critical for the proper functioning of the body, the regulation of emotions, the enhancement of cognitive abilities, and general health. When people's sleep is disturbed for a long time, it can have many negative effects on their health, which in turn impacts their daily functioning and overall quality of life.

Effects on Physical Health

A number of biological systems can be adversely affected by chronic insomnia, which in turn increases the risk of different health problems. Daytime sleepiness and low energy are common physical side effects that might hinder productivity at work, participation in physical exercise, and completion of everyday tasks. A lack of enthusiasm, chronic fatigue, and weakness are common complaints from people who suffer from insomnia.

Sleep deprivation has further negative effects on the immune system, making the body less effective at fighting off diseases and infections. People who have trouble sleeping on a regular basis may have compromised immune systems, making them more prone to illnesses like the common cold and the flu, according to research.

A higher incidence of cardiovascular disorders, such as high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, heart attacks, and strokes, has been associated with insomnia. Heart health can take a hit when sleep deprivation leads to inflammatory changes, high blood pressure, and disruptions in metabolic regulation.

Metabolic diseases including type 2 diabetes and obesity are also linked to chronic sleeplessness. Insomnia, weight gain, and insulin resistance can result from changes in hormone levels that control hunger and glucose metabolism.

Effects on Mental Health

Insomnia and mental health have a complicated and two-way relationship. Mental health issues can disrupt sleep patterns, and chronic sleep disruptions can exacerbate or even cause psychiatric disorders.

Concern for one's mental health is a common side effect of sleeplessness. When people have trouble sleeping, they may start to worry that they will not get enough sleep, which can lead to stress and even more trouble sleeping. Similar to how low mood, hopelessness, and lack of interest in daily tasks are common among depressed people, sleeplessness is also closely connected with depression.

Attention, focus, memory, learning capacity, and decision-making abilities are all negatively impacted by insomnia. Due to the importance of sleep in processing information and consolidating memories, insufficient sleep may have a negative impact on performance in school and the workplace.

Additionally, anger, mood swings, emotional instability, and a decreased tolerance for stress can result from prolonged sleep deprivation. Problems with social functioning and increased occurrences of interpersonal conflicts may result from people's inability to handle common life stresses.

Effects on People's Quality of Life as a Whole

A person's quality of life can be drastically diminished by the cumulative impact of insomnia on their body and mind. Experiencing chronic sleep disruptions can have negative effects on productivity, attendance, social interactions, and healthcare consumption. Impaired awareness and reaction time brought on by persistent sleeplessness can raise the risk of accidents and lead to long-term health problems in severe circumstances.

There must be effective methods of managing insomnia because of the significant negative effects it has on both mental and physical health. For individuals who suffer from chronic insomnia, complementary therapies like acupressure may provide a non-invasive way to enhance the quality of their sleep and improve their general health.

Conclusion

The effects of insomnia on people's physical health, emotional health, and quality of life are far-reaching, and the disorder affects a large percentage of adults. Fatigue, diminished cognitive performance, decreased productivity, emotional discomfort, and an increased risk of chronic health disorders like cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, anxiety, and depression can result from persistent sleep abnormalities. The significance of finding long-term solutions to improve sleep quality is underscored by these negative impacts. A new complementary and non-pharmacological method for treating insomnia, acupressure therapy, has recently gained popularity. Through the application of gentle pressure to certain acupoints, acupressure has the potential to alleviate stress, normalize neurological function, increase the quality of sleep, and hasten the onset and maintenance of sleep. An appealing alternative or supplement to traditional treatments, it is non-invasive, inexpensive, easy to administer, and has little side

effects. Based on the research that has been done, acupressure can help adults with insomnia have a better night's sleep. It can increase their sleep duration, efficiency, and overall contentment with their sleep. Furthermore, acupressure has the potential to alleviate worry, stress, and other elements that disrupt sleep. To provide better evidence and consistent therapeutic guidelines, additional well-designed randomized controlled trials are needed, although there are differences in study designs and treatment methods. When it comes to helping individuals who suffer from insomnia get a better night's rest, acupressure therapy is an excellent supplementary intervention. People who suffer from sleep disorders may find better health results, more well-being, and a higher quality of life if holistic sleep management programs include acupressure.

References

- Buysse, D. J. (2013). Insomnia. *JAMA*, 309(7), 706–716.
- Edinger, J. D., & Means, M. K. (2005). Cognitive-behavioral therapy for primary insomnia. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 25(5), 539–558.
- Lee, E. J., Frazier, S. K., & Porter, C. (2011). Therapeutic effects of acupressure in symptom management: A systematic review. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 42(4), 589–603.
- Morin, C. M., & Benca, R. (2012). Chronic insomnia. *The Lancet*, 379(9821), 1129–1141.
- National Sleep Foundation. (2020). *Sleep health and insomnia: Understanding sleep disorders*. Washington, DC: National Sleep Foundation.
- Riemann, D., Baglioni, C., Bassetti, C., Bjorvatn, B., Dolenc Groselj, L., Ellis, J. G., ... & Spiegelhalder, K. (2017). European guideline for the diagnosis and treatment of insomnia. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 26(6), 675–700.
- Tsay, S. L., Cho, Y. C., & Chen, M. L. (2004). Acupressure and quality of sleep in patients with sleep disturbances. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 46(4), 380–387.
- World Health Organization. (2022). *World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.
- Yeh, M. L., Chen, H. H., & Lin, I. H. (2015). Effects of acupressure on sleep quality and psychological well-being: A systematic review. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 23(2), 240–248.
- Yeung, W. F., Chung, K. F., Leung, Y. K., Zhang, S. P., Law, A. C. K., & Wong, C. Y. (2012). Traditional needle acupuncture treatment for insomnia: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *Sleep Medicine*, 13(1), 73–104.
- Zhang, J., Lam, S. P., Li, S. X., Ma, R. C. W., Kong, A. P. S., Chan, M. H. M., ... & Wing, Y. K. (2012). A community-based study on the prevalence and correlates of insomnia in adults. *Sleep Medicine*, 13(9), 1169–1176.
- Zisapel, N. (2018). New perspectives on the role of melatonin in human sleep, circadian rhythms, and their regulation. *British Journal of Pharmacology*, 175(16), 3190–3199.