



KATIE BRINDLE

## Sleep Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



# Overview

Good sleep is deep, restorative and uninterrupted, allowing the body and mind to rejuvenate, leaving us refreshed and alert for the day ahead. It reflects a balance of Yin (cool, restful energy) and Yang (warm, active energy) that will ensure our immune system is strong and will help to maintain a healthy weight, improve our productivity, creativity and physical ability.

Poor sleep, by contrast, can manifest as symptoms that affect both physical and emotional well-being, including:

- Fatigue and tiredness with a general lack of energy, sluggishness and motivation, often with a muzzy head or headache on waking.
- Difficulty in concentrating, impaired judgement, forgetfulness or decreased cognitive function.
- Weakened immune system with increased vulnerability to colds and infections, as well as more serious conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, even dementia.
- Gastrointestinal concerns such as weight gain or obesity, indigestion, heartburn or IBS, resulting from increased inflammation and dampness.
- Elevated levels of stress, anxiety, depression, moodiness, irritability or emotional instability.

@katie\_brindle

[katiebrindle.com](http://katiebrindle.com)

[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)



# Causes of Poor Sleep

- Imbalance in Yin and Yang

- Yin Deficiency: Yin is the cooling and nourishing energy that restores and calms as we sleep. An imbalance may present as feeling hot at night, night sweats and restlessness, typically due to overwork, stress, or poor diet.

- Yang Deficiency: Yang is the warming and energising force that drives us throughout the day. An imbalance may present as feeling cold or difficulty in waking up refreshed. It may stem from chronic illness, age, or overall energy depletion.

- Ideally Yin and Yang energy would shift seamlessly from day to night, however imbalances, such as impaired Wei Qi, can cause severe disruptions in sleep.

- Wei Qi is the protective energy that helps prevent external pathogens from invading the body. During the day, the Yang phase, it flows over the exterior of the body before moving to the Yin phase at night, in order to recharge before beginning the cycle again. Disruption of this natural flow can cause it to become unsettled, resulting in sleep disturbances.

@katie\_brindle

[katiebrindle.com](http://katiebrindle.com)

[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)



- Qi Stagnation

- Chronic emotional stress leads to the stagnation of qi, especially Liver qi which ensures the smooth flow of energy and emotions.

- Injuries or chronic physical conditions can also create energetic blockages that can impede qi flow, affecting quality of sleep.

- Diet and Lifestyle

- Irregular eating habits, such as eating too late at night or having a poor or inconsistent diet can disrupt the Spleen's balance, impacting the digestive system, which can impact sleep.

- Overstimulation, such as excessive use of electronics before bed, too much caffeine or alcohol, or engaging in stimulating activities before sleep can over-activate Yang energy, making it difficult for the body and mind to switch off and settle into sleep.

@katie\_brindle

[katiebrindle.com](http://katiebrindle.com)

[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)



# Organs Implicated in Poor Sleep

- Heart: In Chinese Medicine, the Heart is considered the seat of the mind and spirit. Imbalances and disharmony in the Heart energy can manifest as concerns such as anxiety, palpitations and insomnia. This disharmony can result in blood deficiency; if the Heart lacks sufficient blood to nourish it, it can lead to restlessness and difficulties in either falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Liver: The Liver is responsible for the smooth flow of qi and blood, as well as smoothing the emotions. If there is anger, frustration or unresolved emotions, this can cause the Liver to become unhappy, impacting Liver health and causing restless sleep. This has a knock-on effect on the whole body due to the Liver's role in the detoxification process, which is more active at night. As a consequence, imbalances in the Liver can result in poor detoxification and rejuvenation.
- Lungs: The Lungs play a crucial role in the movement of qi throughout the body as well as respiration. Weak Lung qi can result in lethargy which can lead to poor sleep, or physical concerns such as breathlessness or coughing, which will interrupt sleep. The emotions of the Lungs, such as unprocessed grief or sadness, will also disturb or prevent sleep.
- Spleen: A healthy and balanced Spleen will result in efficient digestion which will help the body to have calm and healing sleep. However, poor dietary and lifestyle habits, including being over-sedentary, will tax and weaken the Spleen, giving rise to the negative emotions of the organ, such as worrying thoughts or overthinking.
- Kidney: Chinese Medicine views the Kidneys as the root of energy in the body, as well as being the energy reserves for other organs to call upon. Deficiencies or disharmony can manifest as chronic fatigue, contributing to poor quality sleep. This can result in continuing stress on the mind and body, as well as causing fear and insecurity, disrupting sleep.

@katie\_brindle

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[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)



# Spirits of the Organs and Sleep

In Chinese Medicine, each organ is associated with a specific spirit, which represents its unique emotional and spiritual aspect and can have a significant bearing on the quality of our sleep.

- Heart: The Shen of the Heart is akin to the mind and consciousness – the Spirit. A calm and anchored Shen is necessary for deep, soothing sleep, so any emotional disturbances, such as stress or sadness, can unsettle this delicate spirit, resulting in anxiety, restlessness and insomnia.
- Liver: The Hun of the Liver, the Ethereal Soul, is what governs our dreams and is responsible for our planning and creativity. If our Hun is disturbed, it can result in vivid or unsettling dreams or difficulty in decision-making, which can impact the quality of our sleep. Additionally, the Hun is said to leave the physical body during sleep, so if there are imbalances this can become erratic, leading to restless sleep or nightmares.
- Spleen: The Yi of the Spleen represents our intellect; our thought, ability to study and the quality of our memory. Imbalances in our Spleen qi can make us prone to overthinking or excessive rumination and worry, leading to an inability to concentrate, which can affect sleep.
- Kidney: The Zhi of the Kidneys is what controls our willpower, drive and ambition. A balanced Zhi will encourage feelings of safety and grounding, allowing for peaceful and calm sleep. However, if the Zhi is disturbed we may feel aimless or lacking in drive. We might even experience phobias or inexplicable fear, leading to chronically poor sleep.
- Lung: The Po of the Lungs, our Corporeal Soul, is related to physical sensations and our instinctive responses. Healthy Lung function and a harmonious Po are essential for relaxed breathing and emotional calm; however grief, sadness or detachment can imply an imbalance, disturbing the quality of our sleep.

@katie\_brindle

[katiebrindle.com](http://katiebrindle.com)

[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)



# Yang Sheng Practices

- Qigong – Regular gentle qigong practice, will help bring the whole body back into balance. Performed before bed as a slow, moving meditation it will help to transition mind and body from active daytime energy to passive rest.
- Meditation and Healing Sounds – Performing the Healing Sounds slowly and meditatively before bed will relax and calm the organs of the body, helping to prepare for sleep. Going around the body, place the hands over each organ and make the appropriate sound. To intensify the soothing benefits of this simple practice, smile into each organ. The sounds are:
  - Heart – Haaa
  - Lungs – Ssss
  - Spleen – Whoo
  - Liver – Shhh
  - Kidneys – Choo
- Bed Time – Align with the Wu Zi clock (Chinese Medicine organ clock) and aim to be asleep by 11pm at the latest. We enter into our highest quality sleep around 40 minutes after we first nod off, so this is the optimum time for the Liver and Gallbladder to regenerate and repair, releasing toxins from the body, making fresh new blood, and allowing the Yang energy to begin to rise again, refreshed for the day ahead.
- Nutrition – Food and drink that overstimulates the nervous system can disrupt sleep, so avoid heavy or spicy meals, alcohol, coffee, or anything straight from the fridge for a few hours before bed. Instead, eat light meals early in the evening, ideally no later than 6pm, and drink chrysanthemum or chamomile tea.

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# Acupressure

Acupressure is a technique that can easily be performed as part of your self-care practices. Gentle pressure is applied to specific points on the body with fingers or an acupressure tool to help clear blockages in the meridians, the pathways of the body through which qi flows.

## HE-7 (Shénmén)

Location: On the crease of the wrist, on the little finger side of the forearm.

Why: Stimulating this point can help reduce anxiety, ease palpitations and promote emotional relaxation to calm the mind and spirit, helping with sleep issues such as insomnia.

## SP-6 (Sānyīnjiāo)

Location: On the inner leg, four finger-widths above the ankle, just behind the shin bone.

Why: Effective for harmonising the Liver, Spleen and Kidney meridians, which can be beneficial for sleep issues related to stress, hormonal imbalances and emotional disturbances.

## PC-6 (Nèiguān)

Location: On the inner arm, three finger-widths above the wrist crease, between the two tendons.

Why: Often used to relieve stress and improve emotional states, stimulating this point can help reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, making it easier to fall and stay asleep.

@katie\_brindle

[katiebrindle.com](http://katiebrindle.com)

[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)





### KID-1 (Yǒngquǎn)

Location: On the sole of the foot, roughly in the depression that appears when the foot is flexed, about one-third the distance between the base of the second toe and the heel.

Why: Known for its grounding abilities and associated with the fundamental energy of the body, stimulating this point can help anchor qi and soothe the mind, especially when thoughts are racing or anxious. It is especially beneficial for promoting peaceful sleep.

## Conclusion

Understanding and addressing sleep issues using the principles of Chinese Medicine involves a holistic approach, considering physical, emotional and spiritual aspects. Practices such as meditation, acupuncture, dietary adjustments and lifestyle adjustments will be key to keeping the organs of the body balanced to ensure restful sleep.

@katie\_brindle

[katiebrindle.com](http://katiebrindle.com)

[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)



# Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey.

The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and [www.hayoumethod.com](http://www.hayoumethod.com)

Buy Yang Sheng Book

Healing Movement classes (3 x each week) and live meditations for a more in-depth and healing practice – full details [here](#)

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health. Find more Healing Masterclasses [here](#).

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram & the opportunity to purchase the accompanying tools from [www.hayoumethod.com](http://www.hayoumethod.com)

## DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit [www.hayoumethod.com](http://www.hayoumethod.com) to view our comprehensive FAQs.

[@katie\\_brindle](#)

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[info@katiebrindle.com](mailto:info@katiebrindle.com)