



## Bodybasics

### *Bedtime Story*

Sleep better at any age – by Barbara Tunick

*Vegetarian Times, July 2003 (excerpts from article featuring Andrea Friedman Ishikawa)*

#### **The Mid-Life Years**

As women age, sleep becomes even more elusive. Insomnia increases in women after age 40. “Even though through adulthood our need for sleep remains constant – about 8 hours – our ability to sleep worsens as we get older,” says Jane Dyonzak, PhD, a Glenview, Illinois-board-certified sleep specialist and fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. “Estrogen levels fluctuate tremendously, and we experience all sorts of changes in our bodies, including our first night sweats and mood swings,” she says.

Irene Phelps, 50, knows all too well what it’s like to live without sleep. About 6 years ago, the Chicago resident started having problems sleeping. While she’d fall asleep without much difficulty, Phelps would wake up between 2 a.m and 4:30 a.m. “I couldn’t fall back to sleep, so I’d get out of bed, start the coffee, pay bills, exercise and go to work. By the end of the day, I’d be too exhausted to move,” she says.

After Phelps, head of a family foundation, started forgetting people’s names, she sought the help of licensed acupuncturist and herbalist Andrea Friedman Ishikawa at the Center for Integrative Medicine at Chicago’s Northwestern Memorial Hospital. “It wasn’t until the night sweats began that I realized I was in the throes of perimenopause. But just a few weeks after starting acupuncture and Chinese herbs, I began sleeping and feeling much better,” she says.

“Acupuncture is one of the best ways to relieve anxiety by stimulating the body’s production of endorphins, which calm the mind and promote sleep,” says Friedman Ishikawa. NIH (National Institute of Health) recognizes acupuncture as a useful treatment for chronic pain such as arthritis as well as other conditions such as depression. A 1995 review study from China’s Shanghai

Second Medical University and published in the journal *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* reports that 90 percent of patients suffering with insomnia were successfully treated with acupuncture. Another study published in March 2000 in the *World Journal of Acupuncture-Moxibustion* reports that 95 percent of the participants in its insomnia study overcame their insomnia and 3 percent of the remaining 5 percent improved.

Phelps – who sought and found relief from insomnia with acupuncture – is now in menopause. “Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night for any number of reasons, but I’m able to fall right back to sleep. I know everything’s easier, and my hot flashes are much milder because I exercise regularly, eat a low-fat diet with lots of fruits and vegetables and have acupuncture once a month,” she says, “I feel great – better than I have in ages.”