## Anxiety, Restlessness, Palpitations

Symptoms like anxiety, restlessness, and palpitations are signs of a disturbance of the Shén (神) — the spirit or mind — which is housed in the Heart (心). These symptoms indicate that the Shén is either unanchored, agitated, or obstructed, depending on the underlying imbalance. While these three symptoms can appear together or separately, they usually share a common root: the Heart is unable to properly govern the Shén due to deficiency, excess, or internal disruption.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Anxiety (焦虑 / 忧虑) | Restlessness (烦躁) | Palpitations (心悸) |
| An emotional state of inner unease, often accompanied by worry, fear, or overthinking. In TCM, anxiety typically results from:* Heart Qi or Blood deficiency (the Shen is unanchored)
* Heart Yin deficiency (empty Heat disturbs the Shen)
* Phlegm-Heat or Fire (excessive internal Heat agitates the mind)
* Heart-Kidney disharmony (inability to stabilize emotional center)
 | This is a feeling of agitation or internal discomfort. The person may be fidgety, unsettled, or emotionally volatile. It is often caused by:* Yin deficiency with Heat (particularly Heart or Kidney Yin)
* Liver Fire or Liver Qi constraint transforming into Heat.
* Heat invading the Pericardium (in febrile disease)
* Phlegm-Fire disturbing the Heart
 | A subjective awareness of the heartbeat, usually irregular or fast. This often reflects:* Heart Qi or Blood deficiency (inability to nourish Heart)
* Heart Yin deficiency (leading to flaring of deficient Heat)
* Phlegm or stagnation blocking Heart Qi
* Shock or fear disturbing the Heart
 |

Common TCM Patterns That Cause These Symptoms include:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pattern | Cause | Symptoms | Tongue | Pulse |
| Heart Blood Deficiency | Chronic illness, poor digestion, Spleen deficiency, excessive thinking | Palpitations, anxiety, light sleep, poor memory, pale complexion | Pale, thin | Thin, weak |
| Heart Yin Deficiency | Overwork, long-term worry, febrile disease, excessive sexual activity | Anxiety, restlessness, palpitations, night sweats, dry mouth, insomnia | Red, little or no coating | Thin, rapid |
| Heart Fire or Phlegm-Fire Harassing the Heart | Emotional excess, Liver Qi stagnation turning to Fire, rich diet | Intense anxiety, agitation, palpitations, red face, thirst, mouth ulcers, insomnia | Red, yellow coat (or greasy if Phlegm-Fire) | Rapid, full, slippery (if Phlegm present) |
| Heart and Kidney Disharmony | Kidney Yin fails to anchor the Heart Fire, or shock damages the connection | Anxiety with fear, palpitations, insomnia, tinnitus, dizziness, low back ache | Red with no coat | Thin, rapid |
| Heart Qi Deficiency | Overexertion, chronic illness, weak constitution | Palpitations (especially with exertion), mild anxiety, fatigue, spontaneous sweating | Pale | Weak or empty |
| Shock or Emotional Trauma | Sudden fright or grief that damages Heart and Kidney | Palpitations, panic attacks, dream-disturbed sleep, fear, confusion | May be pale or red | Thin, tight, or irregular |

Anxiety, restlessness, and palpitations in TCM are symptoms of Shen disturbance, typically from Heart system imbalance — often related to Blood or Yin deficiency, internal Fire, Phlegm obstruction, or emotional trauma. Proper diagnosis requires identifying the root pattern so the Shen can be calmed, the Heart nourished, and balance restored.