

**Have you slept well recently?**  
**Poor sleep may increase risk of cardiovascular disease!**



Is it true that the older you get, the less you sleep? According to a questionnaire survey conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey in February 2020, about 7 out of 10 Hong Kong residents suffer from insomnia<sup>1</sup>. As we age, it is normal for our sleep and deep sleep to shorten<sup>2</sup>. However, if the quality of our sleep is poor, not only will this affect our mental state during the day, such sleep disorders may also increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

**Sleeping a lot does not mean sleeping well.**

When it comes to sleep, many people think that simply having a long, uninterrupted period of sleep throughout the night means that one is practicing healthy sleep habits. This is a misunderstanding. While good sleep can restore the body, merely sleeping more without reaching the stage of deep sleep due to various sleep disorders will have only a marginal effect on recovery.

Common sleep disorders include insomnia, sleep apnoea, hypersomnia, and parasomnia (sleepwalking). Let us examine two of the sleep disorders: insomnia and sleep apnoea.

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<sup>1</sup> 香港失眠研究報告. (2020). Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://www.have-a-goodnight.hk/report/>

<sup>2</sup> Li, J., Vitiello, M. V., & Gooneratne, N. (2019). Sleep in Normal Aging. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5841578/#:~:text=Compared%20with%20young%20adults%20\(10.5,shorter%20average%20nighttime%20sleep%20duration.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5841578/#:~:text=Compared%20with%20young%20adults%20(10.5,shorter%20average%20nighttime%20sleep%20duration.)

### Insomnia<sup>3</sup>

Insomnia can refer to difficulty falling asleep, maintaining a state of sleep, or even both at the same time. Insomnia can be divided into acute and chronic insomnia.

- **Acute insomnia** is usually caused by stress or mental trauma and can last from several days to several weeks.
- **Chronic insomnia** may arise as a symptom of other diseases, or as a side effect of certain conditions such as drugs or other sleep disorders, etc. It may also be caused by caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, etc., but not all of the causes can be identified. Chronic insomnia can last for a month or longer.

Difficulty in maintaining sleep is a symptom of insomnia. Insomniacs may sleep only intermittently throughout the night, wake up prematurely, or even wake up feeling as though they had not slept at all. Faced with this, many people may try to take nutritional supplements or even sleeping pills to improve the situation. However, if insomnia persists despite multiple attempts at self-treatment, the sufferer should seek professional medical advice as soon as possible. The doctor will diagnose the cause of the patient's insomnia via consultation, clinical examination, sleep testing, and prescribe the appropriate treatment.

### Sleep apnoea<sup>4</sup>

Sleep apnoea is not just the occurrence of snoring, but a sleep disorder where the sufferer's breathing is shallow or even stops during sleep. People suffering from sleep apnoea stop breathing from a few seconds to even minutes at a time, something which can occur up to 30 times per hour or more. Sleep apnoea is related to insomnia and may even cause other sleep disorders, a common example being hypersomnia.

Sleep apnoea is classified into three types: obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA), central sleep apnoea (CSA) and mixed sleep apnoea. Of these, obstructive sleep apnoea is the most common, with 90% of sleep apnoea cases falling into this category<sup>5</sup>. Studies show that 4.1% of men and 2.1% of women in HK between 30-60 suffer from obstructive sleep apnoea<sup>6</sup>.

When a sufferer of OSA is sleeping, the soft tissue near the throat relaxes and obstructs the airways, causing suffocation. When breathing resumes, there may be snoring or choking sounds. Although sufferers of OSA will generally snore comparatively loudly, snoring does not necessarily indicate sleep apnoea. To diagnose whether a patient suffers from sleep apnoea, doctors need to study their personal medical history, family medical history, conduct clinical examinations, and perform sleep tests.

### Sleep disorders can affect cardiovascular health.

Sleep disorders not only affect the mental state of patients during the day, but may also increase their risk of cardiovascular disease. Take sleep apnoea for example. If not properly addressed, it can increase the risk of hypertension, coronary heart disease, atrial fibrillation,

<sup>3</sup> U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2020, April 30). Insomnia. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://medlineplus.gov/insomnia.html>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2020, July 07). Sleep Apnea. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://medlineplus.gov/sleepapnea.html>

<sup>5</sup> Hospital Authority. Sleep Apnoea 睡眠窒息症. (2011, April). Retrieved September 25, 2020, from [https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/doc/information/publications/1\\_10.pdf](https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/doc/information/publications/1_10.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ip, M., Lam, B., Tang, L., Launder, L., Ip, T., & Lam, W. (2004). A Community Study of Sleep-Disordered Breathing in Middle-Aged Chinese Women in Hong Kong. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from [https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012-3692\(15\)31783-9/fulltext](https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012-3692(15)31783-9/fulltext)

stroke, and heart failure. Two clinical trials have pointed out that 50-60% of patients with systolic heart failure also suffer from sleep apnoea.<sup>7</sup> In addition, OSA can cause drowsiness during the day and sufferers are 2-6 times more likely to encounter a traffic accident than ordinary people. This is why obstructive sleep apnoea endangers both the self and the people around you.<sup>8</sup>

A variety of sleep disorders are related to sleep apnoea. Therefore, if you find that your long-term sleep quality is poor, you should consult a doctor as soon as possible and diagnose your sleep disorder through a sleep test.

*This health article was written by the FindDoc editorial team, and has been reviewed by Dr. Julian Yau Kay Chung, a specialist in ENT. FindDoc is the pioneer of healthcare information and service platform in Hong Kong, providing an intuitive platform to help people more easily access information and service of medical practitioners and allied health professionals, then efficiently schedule both in-person or video appointments anytime, anywhere.*

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<sup>7</sup> McEvoy, R. (n.d.). Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Heart Failure Two Unhappy Bedfellows. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/full/10.1164/rccm.2312013>

<sup>8</sup> Hong Kong Specialist Medical Association. 睡眠手冊 對抗失眠有妙法. (n.d.). Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <http://www.hksma.org.hk/portal/content.do?path=/zh/mediaC/publicInfoC/healthInfoC/RespiratoryDivision#:~:text=阻塞性睡眠窒息症患者交通意外的機會,性睡眠窒息症刻不容緩%E3%80%82>

你最近睡得好嗎？

睡眠差隨時增加患心血管疾病風險



年紀愈大，就會睡得愈少，睡眠質素愈差？根據香港中文大學傳播與民意調查中心在 2020 年 2 月進行的問卷調查，每 10 個港人就約有 7 個受失眠問題困擾<sup>9</sup>。隨著年齡增長，睡眠和深層睡眠時間縮短本是正常的事<sup>10</sup>，但如果睡眠質素差，不但會影響我們日間的精神狀態，各種睡眠障礙更會增加患心血管疾病的風險。

### 睡得多不代表睡得好

說到睡眠，不少人以為睡得多、半夜沒睡醒就是健康，這絕對是個誤解。良好的睡眠能讓身體恢復狀態。但如果只是睡得多，卻因不同的睡眠障礙而達不到熟睡的階段，這對身體復原的作用便十分有限。

常見的睡眠障礙包括失眠、睡眠窒息症、嗜睡症和異類睡眠症（夢遊）。以下就讓我們了解失眠和睡眠窒息症這兩種睡眠障礙。

<sup>9</sup> 香港失眠研究報告. (2020). Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://www.have-a-goodnight.hk/report/>

<sup>10</sup> Li, J., Vitiello, M. V., & Gooneratne, N. (2019). Sleep in Normal Aging. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5841578/#:~:text=Compared%20with%20young%20adults%20\(10.5,shorter%20average%20nighttime%20sleep%20duration.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5841578/#:~:text=Compared%20with%20young%20adults%20(10.5,shorter%20average%20nighttime%20sleep%20duration.)

## 失眠<sup>11</sup>

失眠，是指難以入睡，或者難以維持睡眠的狀態，甚至兩種情況同時出現。失眠可分為急性和慢性失眠。

- **急性失眠**通常因壓力或者精神創傷造成，情況會維持數天至數個星期。
- **慢性失眠**有機會是其他疾病的症狀或某些狀況造成的副作用，例如藥物、其他睡眠障礙等，也有可能是咖啡因、煙草、酒精等造成，但也有部分是找不到成因的。慢性失眠的情況可持續一個月或以上。

難以維持睡眠狀態是失眠的症狀，患者可能會整晚斷斷續續地進睡，過早醒來，甚至睡醒了也感覺沒有睡過一樣。面對這種情況，不少人會嘗試服用一些營養補充品甚至安眠藥來改善情況。但如果經過多番嘗試還是失眠，患者便應該及早求醫。醫生會透過問診、臨床檢查以及睡眠測試等為患者找出失眠成因，從而對症下藥。

## 睡眠窒息症<sup>12</sup>

睡眠窒息症並不只是出現「打鼻鼾」（「打呼嚕」）這麼簡單，而是一種讓患者在睡眠時呼吸變淺甚至停止的睡眠障礙。睡眠窒息症患者每次呼吸暫停的時間可長達數秒以至數分鐘，一小時內呼吸可暫停多達 30 次或以上。睡眠窒息症不但與失眠有關，也有機會引致其他睡眠障礙，較常見的有嗜睡症。

睡眠窒息症分為阻塞性睡眠窒息症、中樞性睡眠窒息症和混合性睡眠窒息症三種。當中以阻塞性睡眠窒息症最為常見，90%的睡眠窒息症患者都屬此類別<sup>13</sup>。在本港 30-60 歲的人口當中，4.1%的男性及 2.1%的女性患有阻塞性睡眠窒息症<sup>14</sup>。

阻塞性睡眠窒息症患者在睡覺的時候，喉嚨附近的軟組織鬆弛而阻塞上呼吸道，使呼吸道收窄而造成窒息。當再次恢復呼吸時，患者會發出打鼻鼾或者哽噎的聲音。雖然阻塞性睡眠窒息症患者的呼嚕聲通常較大，但打鼻鼾不一定代表患睡眠窒息症。要診斷病人是否患有睡眠窒息症，醫生需要研究他的個人病歷和家族病史、作臨床檢查，以及進行睡眠測試。

<sup>11</sup> U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2020, April 30). Insomnia. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://medlineplus.gov/insomnia.html>

<sup>12</sup> U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2020, July 07). Sleep Apnea. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://medlineplus.gov/sleepapnea.html>

<sup>13</sup> Hospital Authority. Sleep Apnoea 睡眠窒息症. (2011, April). Retrieved September 25, 2020, from [https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/doc/information/publications/1\\_10.pdf](https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/doc/information/publications/1_10.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ip, M., Lam, B., Tang, L., Launder, L., Ip, T., & Lam, W. (2004). A Community Study of Sleep-Disordered Breathing in Middle-Aged Chinese Women in Hong Kong. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from [https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012-3692\(15\)31783-9/fulltext](https://journal.chestnet.org/article/S0012-3692(15)31783-9/fulltext)

### 睡眠障礙可影響心血管健康

睡眠障礙不但影響患者日間的精神狀態，更有機會增加他們患上心血管疾病的風險。以睡眠窒息症為例，如果沒有好好處理，可增加高血壓、冠心病、心房顫動、中風和心臟衰竭的風險。曾經有兩項研究指出，50-60%的收縮性心臟衰竭患者同時患有睡眠窒息症。<sup>15</sup>此外，阻塞性睡眠窒息症患者日間困倦的狀況，讓他們遇上交通意外的機會較常人高出 2-6 倍，可見阻塞性睡眠窒息症可同時為患者及其身邊的人造成危險。<sup>16</sup>

多種睡眠障礙都與睡眠窒息症有關。因此，如發現自己長期睡不好，便應及早求診，並透過睡眠測試儘早找出自己的睡眠問題。

文章由 FindDoc 撰寫，並經耳鼻喉科專科邱騏驄醫生審閱。FindDoc 是一站式醫療健康資訊及服務平台，為市民大眾提供全面、最新的健康資訊，更提供網上預約醫生、醫療服務及視像問診服務。

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<sup>15</sup> McEvoy, R. (n.d.). Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Heart Failure Two Unhappy Bedfellows. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/full/10.1164/rccm.2312013>

<sup>16</sup> Hong Kong Specialist Medical Association. 睡眠手冊 對抗失眠有妙法. (n.d.). Retrieved September 25, 2020, from <http://www.hksma.org.hk/portal/content.do?path=/zh/mediaC/publicInfoC/healthInfoC/RespiratoryDivision#:~:text=阻塞性睡眠窒息症患者交通意外的機會,性睡眠窒息症刻不容緩%E3%80%82>