



Rest well today, live life well

Sleep is a fundamental biological necessity, essential for our physical and mental wellbeing. Beyond simply helping us feel rested, healthy sleep supports memory, mood regulation, immune function, and long-term cardiovascular health.

Yet, many of us focus solely on the number of hours we spend in bed, without considering whether our sleep is truly restorative.



To explore this further, we spoke with **Dr Lee Chuen Peng, Medical Director and Sleep Physician at O2 SleepWell Laboratory.**

In this newsletter, we delve deeper into common sleep disorders, the importance of sleep quality, and how everyday habits quietly affect your long-term health.

Q&A with Dr Lee Chuen Peng

Q: Why does sleep quality matter just as much as sleep duration?

Dr Lee: Sleep is when your body and mind carry out essential repair and recovery, so it is not just about how long you sleep, but how well you sleep. You might spend eight hours in bed but still experience fragmented rest, which prevents your body from reaching the deep sleep stages required for physical and cognitive recovery. Over time, disrupted sleep can affect your concentration, mood, immunity, and metabolic health.

Q: What are the signs that we might not be resting well?

Dr Lee: Poor sleep is not always obvious. Symptoms often develop gradually and can easily be mistaken for stress or ageing. Look out for:

- persistent fatigue despite a full night's sleep
- frequent waking during the night
- difficulty concentrating or memory lapses
- waking up with headaches or a dry mouth
- loud snoring, choking, or gasping during sleep

Q: Are there common sleep conditions we should be aware of?

Dr Lee: Yes. Poor sleep can sometimes point to an underlying medical condition. Common examples include:

- **Insomnia:** difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking too early and being unable to fall back asleep, often leading to daytime fatigue.
- **Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA):** the airway repeatedly collapses during sleep, causing breathing interruptions. Left untreated, it may increase the risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease.
- **Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS):** uncomfortable sensations in the legs, usually at night. It is often relieved by movement, making falling and staying asleep difficult.

Q: What treatment options are available for these conditions, and when should someone seek medical advice?

Dr Lee: Treatment depends on the type and severity of the condition, and a doctor may recommend different options based on your needs.

It is worth seeking medical advice if you experience loud snoring, gasping or choking during sleep, excessive daytime sleepiness, or sleep that feels persistently unrefreshing or fragmented. People with hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or obesity may also benefit from professional screening, as sleep issues can sometimes be linked to wider health risks.

Treatment options may include:

- **Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP):** commonly recommended for moderate-to-severe OSA, these machines deliver a steady stream of air through a mask to prevent airway collapse.
- **Oral appliances:** custom-made devices (mandibular advancement devices) worn during sleep to gently reposition the lower jaw and tongue, helping keep the airway open. Often recommended for mild-to-moderate OSA.
- **Surgical options:** if you can't tolerate your CPAP machine or have physical problems in your airway causing blockages, there are surgical options that may help. Nose procedures like straightening a crooked septum, shrinking swollen nasal tissue, or reshaping the nose have been shown to be the most effective surgeries for making CPAP easier to use. Surgeries on the soft tissues in your throat or on the bones of your jaw may also be helpful for certain carefully chosen patients.
- **Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation (HNS):** a small, implanted device that stimulates the nerve controlling tongue movement to help keep the airway clear during sleep.
- **Myofunctional therapy:** targeted exercises to strengthen mouth and throat muscles, supporting better airway function.
- **Weight management:** since excess weight can narrow airways, dietary changes and physical activity can lower OSA severity and support other health goals.

Choosing the right treatment depends on your specific needs. A doctor can guide you through these options and to tailor a plan that works for you.

Q: Beyond medical conditions, what everyday habits affect our rest?

Dr Lee: Our daily routines heavily influence our sleep-wake cycle:

- **screen time:** blue light exposure before bed suppresses melatonin production.
- **inconsistent sleep schedules:** drastic changes between weekday and weekend sleep schedules disrupt circadian rhythms.
- **repeated snoozing:** repeated early morning interruptions lead to fragmented, low-quality rest.

Q: Are there any simple ways to help us build better habits?

Dr Lee: There is a simple framework of 10-3-2-1 that can help your body wind down effectively:

- **10 hours before bed:** avoid caffeine
- **3 hours before bed:** avoid heavy meals and alcohol
- **2 hours before bed:** stop work-related activities
- **1 hour before bed:** put away screens and electronic devices

Rest well, every day

Quality rest is a vital part of maintaining overall wellbeing. Small, consistent changes—like keeping a cool, dark sleep environment and maintaining a regular schedule—can make a significant difference.

Through Live Life Well, HSBC Life shares practical insights to support healthier living. Help someone you care about rest better too. Share this newsletter with family and friends, and invite them to subscribe at [grp.hsbc/livelifewell](https://www.hsbc.com/livelifewell).

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Wishing you good health and wellbeing,

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