

Is Technology Disrupting Our Natural Sleeping Patterns?

Freelance writer Jane Evans reminds us that good technology habits lead to better sleep in this contributed post.

Technology: The Greatest Sleep Deterrent of Our Times

Nearly a third of all Americans, equating to more than 40 million, are sleep deprived according to data released by the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC). Although stress, medication, [work schedules and underlying medical conditions](#) are historically among the most prevalent causes of insomnia and other sleeping disorders, there is a new villain in town: technology. While we have known for some time that artificial light, can wreak havoc with our circadian rhythms, we are becoming increasingly dependent on electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, TVs and computers, to the great detriment of our health and wellbeing. But just how does technology cause us to toss and turn all night? Let's have a closer look at the immense impact our favorite gadgets have on our sleep.

Technology can wake you up, repeatedly

Even if you don't use your smartphone or tablet shortly before bedtime, they can still [disrupt your sleep with the incessant alerts](#) of texts, emails, calls, and reminders. Nearly two-thirds of adults (and as much as 90% of those between the ages of 18 and 29) take their electronic devices to the bedroom,

leaving them switched on throughout the night, as reported by the Pew Research Center. Being woken up even just once a night [by a cellphone alert](#) can cost you as much as an hour of sleep a night which is a lot considering the average adult requires between 8 and 9 hours of sleep every day. When you go to bed, either switch your devices off or leave them in another room.

Over-stimulation keeps your mind awake

If you are prone to playing games on your phone, chatting on social media or browsing the web shortly before bedtime, chances are you will not only battle to fall asleep but stay asleep as well. This is due to your brain being over-stimulated to the extent where your mind does not want to shut down, allowing you to fall asleep. With the National Sleep Foundation estimating that nearly 95% of Americans fail to give their eyes and minds a break from electronic devices prior to bed-time, it is no wonder that the prevalence of insomnia is so high. Give yourself at least an hour of screen-free time before you go to bed to allow your mind to settle and your melatonin production to kick in.



Is there a difference between passive and interactive activity?

The type of electronic device you are using, together with the duration of use and the type of application can all affect your sleep in varying ways. Interactive use of a device, such as chatting or playing games has been found to be substantially more detrimental to sleep than passive use, which includes reading an online [book or watching movies](#). The effects of passive use should in no way be ignored though as it can also hinder the production of melatonin. A study conducted at Harvard University found that people who make use of e-readers require, on average, ten minutes more than their paper-reading counterparts to fall asleep.

As much as technology has become a blessing in our lives, it

can also be a curse if used excessively. If you want to remain healthy and productive, it is important to ensure that your device usage is not hampering your sleep in any way.