

Intensive mobile phone use affects young people's sleep

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Young adults who make particularly heavy use of mobile phones and computers run a greater risk of sleep disturbances, stress and symptoms of mental health. "Public health advice should therefore include information on the healthy use of this technology," says researcher Sara Thomée from the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Doctoral student Sara Thomée and her research colleagues at the University of Gothenburg's Sahlgrenska Academy have conducted four different studies looking at how the use of computers and mobile phones affects the [mental health](#) of young adults.

Stress and sleep disorders

These studies, which included questionnaires for 4,100 people aged 20-24 and interviews with 32 young heavy ICT users, reveal that intensive use of mobile phones and computers can be linked to [stress](#), sleep disorders and depressive symptoms.

"We looked at the effects both quantitatively and qualitatively and followed up the volunteers a year on," explains Thomée, who will present the results in her upcoming thesis. "The conclusion is that intensive use of ICT can have an impact on mental health among [young adults](#)."

Linked to depressive symptoms

The studies reveal, for example, that heavy mobile use is linked to an increase in sleeping problems in men and an increase in depressive symptoms in both men and women.

"Those who find the constant accessibility via mobile phones to be stressful are most likely to report mental symptoms," says Thomée.

Late-night computer use a risk

Frequently using a computer without breaks also increases the risk of stress, sleeping problems and depressive symptoms in women, whereas men who use computers intensively are more likely to develop sleeping problems.

"Regularly using a computer late at night is associated not only with [sleep](#) disorders but also with stress and depressive symptoms in both men and women," says Thomée.

Need for health advice

A combination of both heavy computer use and heavy mobile use makes the association even stronger. One conclusion is that public health advice to young people should include information on how to use ICT in a healthy way:

"This means taking breaks, taking time to recover after intensive use, and putting limits on your availability," Sara Thomée explains.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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