

Teens' sleep impacted by electronic media use

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(Medical Xpress)—New research from the University of Adelaide shows more than 70% of South Australian teenagers are experiencing insufficient sleep on every school night, with many reporting the overuse of electronic media such as the internet, video games and mobile phones, which could be contributing to the problem.

Researchers from the University's School of Psychology surveyed the electronic media and sleep habits of more than 1200 students aged 12-18 from seven high schools.

The results, published in the *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, show that many young people aren't getting adequate sleep - and the problem is much worse in one out of every 10 teens, who are addicted to electronic media.

"Although there are many known benefits of electronic media for young people, including opportunities for learning and socialisation, previous studies have suggested that excessive electronic media use could impact negatively on sleeping patterns and the quality of sleep," says the lead author of the study, Dr Daniel King from the University of Adelaide's School of Psychology.

"Our study has found that more than 70% of adolescents are not receiving optimal sleep during weekdays, with use of electronic media delaying the time they go to bed, interrupting them during the night, and leading to longer times to achieve a deep sleep.

"Lack of sleep can have significant health and mental health effects on young people, and can lead to problems with learning and concentration, poor eating habits, and a range of other behaviours that are either unhealthy or undesirable," Dr King says.

"One of our concerns, and one of the reasons for conducting this study, was to better understand pathological electronic media use by adolescents. This is a persistent pattern of media use that is not regulated or limited by the user, which interferes with other daily activities and commitments.

"In total, about 10% of the young people we surveyed met some of the criteria for pathological electronic media use, which included internet use and online gaming. Our study suggests that adolescent [sleep](#) is significantly disrupted when electronic media is used pathologically," he says.

According to the survey, teenage boys report spending more than three-and-a-half hours every weekday on screen-based electronic media, and more than four-and-a-half hours per day on weekends. Teenage girls spend just over three hours on [electronic media](#) during weekdays, and almost three and three-quarter hours on weekends. Boys spend much more time playing video games compared with girls.

"Because of the potential negative impacts of excessive media use, we believe it would be useful to develop public health guidelines to educate [young people](#), parents and teachers about responsible use," Dr King says.

More information: "Sleep Interference Effects of Pathological Electronic Media Use during Adolescence." Daniel L. King, Paul H. Delfabbro, Tara Zwaans, Dean Kaptsis. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, December 2013. [DOI: 10.1007/s11469-013-9461-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-013-9461-2)

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