

How sleepiness affects young daredevils' risky behaviour

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Risky behaviours such as dangerous driving, violence, and substance use are some of the leading contributors to rates of injury and death in young adults aged 18-25 and a QUT sleep researcher wants to find out if too little sleep is partly to blame for their daredevil behaviour.

Kalina Rossa, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q), said [young adults](#) were very sensitive to the effects of [sleep](#) deprivation and even brief periods of restricted sleep could have a significant impact on their emotions and likelihood of risk taking.

"We know that sleep is really important for a healthy body and mind and that young people's sleep is often compromised due to work, social and educational commitments," Ms Rossa said.

"We also know that when people don't sleep it causes negative effects on their mood and how they respond to stress.

"This is even more evident in young adults because the part of the brain that is responsible for behavioural control is affected by sleep loss and happens to be still maturing."

Ms Rossa said risky driving, violent behaviours, self-harm and drug use were the top underlying causes of [injury](#) and [death](#) in young adults in Australia and worldwide.

She said a better understanding of how sleep loss, mood and stress influence the way young people engage with their peers and environment in risky ways was paramount to improving the health and safety of young adults.

"For example, we know that people who are tired or moody may be more impulsive, or not think about the consequences of their actions," she said.

"Sleep loss also changes how people perceive and think about the world around them.

"A well-rested individual may think and act differently when presented with a choice to do something risky compared to someone who is tired, grumpy and at the end of their tether."

Ms Rossa has developed an online survey designed to tease out some of the potential relationships between sleep, stress and risk taking.

Sleep is modifiable by the individual and if we understand how sleep plays into some of these behaviours that may be causing harm to young adults, we can plan strategies around improving healthy sleep practices and potentially reducing harms associated with risky behaviours," she said.

The survey, available [here](#), is open to young people aged 18 to 25 with no current medically diagnosed sleep disorders.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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