

Teens shift sleeping patterns on weekends, return to school 'jet lagged'

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Credit: Örebro Universitet

A lack of sleep is associated with more absence and teens turn up jet lagged to school on Mondays, as shown in a doctoral thesis by sleep researcher Serena Bauducco, at Örebro University, Sweden.

"My research is about understanding young people's sleeping patterns and what factors are linked to these. I am interested in why so many young people do not get enough [sleep](#) and what can be done about it," says Serena Bauducco, linked to the School of Law, Psychology and Social Work at Örebro University.

She has now presented her thesis showing that for teens who do not get enough sleep, their mental well-being is affected. Their sleep routines are not as good and they are more stressed and worried about school than those who get the sleep they need. These [young people](#) also bring their mobile phone or computer to bed to a greater extent than others.

In her thesis, Serena Bauducco also shows that problems with sleep are directly linked to a higher degree of absence from school.

"Those teens that showed symptoms of difficulties sleeping had three times as much absence than those who did not. That is quite a lot."

"We also checked other things that may be related to a high level of absence – for example bullying, depression and anxiety. But the correlation between difficulties sleeping and why they did not go to school was very clear."

Her thesis is based on a study of approximately 2,700 upper secondary school pupils, aged 13-16. The study shows that teens sleep longer at weekends. And because they go to bed later and wake up later, they turn up for school with a changed sleeping cycle. In other words – they suffer from jet lag.

"As a result, they may be tired and grumpy at school. Studies show that not getting enough sleep may affect learning," says Serena Bauducco.

For some, it may take three to four days to get back into routine – and by

then, the school week is nearly over. But for the large majority, the weekend-related jet lag is not a big deal. Almost all teens in the study did suffer from jet lag, but a majority of them did get enough sleep during the week.

"Nevertheless, it was still 20 per cent of those taking part in the study that on the whole did not get enough sleep," says Serena Bauducco.

As children approach adolescence, they develop later evening habits and it takes them longer to get to sleep once they have gone to bed. This is a natural part of their development, but it can obviously still be difficult to manage.

Serena Bauducco and her research colleagues therefore set up a programme with upper secondary school pupils in Örebro. The aim was to help the teens to create routines for themselves to get good sleep. It included simple things like not bringing their [mobile phone](#) into bed with them, and not sending or responding to text messages after 10 o'clock at night. But it also emphasised the importance of planning their [time](#) to make room for both school, spare time – and sleep.

"One outcome was that those who had previously got the least sleep, improved their sleeping routines. They were less stressed and slept better."

So can you draw the conclusion that those teens who do not sleep very well, also find school work difficult?

"It is not something that we have looked at, but there are other studies that point to that."

There are schools in Sweden that have introduced later school start times to adjust to teenagers' biological rhythm. Some researchers say that

sleeping in may lead to pupils performing better at school.

Serena Bauducco thinks this is an interesting development.

"A later start to the [school](#) day would lead to so many other things; staff have to change their working hours, bus time tables need changing and so on. I still think it is worth a try, as long as you also evaluate the effects of such structural change."

More information: Adolescents' sleep in a 24/7 society: Epidemiology and prevention. oru.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?aq2=%5B%5B%5D%5D&c=5&af=%5B%5D&searchType=SIMPLE&query=Serena+Bauducco&language=sv&pid=diva2%3A1103675&aq=%5B%5B%5D%5D&sf=all&aqe=%5B%5D&sortOrder=author_sort_asc&onlyFullText=false&noOfRows=50&dswid=74

Provided by Örebro Universitet

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