

Leave the job at work to ensure better health and sleep

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Feeling tired, sluggish and sleep-deprived? The culprit could be work-creep, according to new research from the University of South Australia released today.

An international study of 230 healthcare employees over two years reveals what many people have long suspected: continuing to work after hours – whether it's emailing, checking phones, laptops and text messages – has an impact on productivity, sleep and stress.

In a paper published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, researchers from the University of South Australia, the Netherlands and Japan show that work-related activities after hours affect sleep quality and the ability to relax and recharge for the next day.

Lead researcher, UniSA Adjunct Professor Jan de Jonge, says low-effort activities such as reading, watching television or listening to music help people detach from work and ensure a good night's sleep. Previous research has shown that a daytime nap of around 30 minutes also helps to restore alertness and improve productivity.

Work-related tasks, however, affect our mental and emotional recovery states after work. On the other hand, housework, cooking and looking after children are positively related to [sleep quality](#) in the long run.

"These latter activities are both resource-depleting and enhancing, helping to both disengage from the job and get a better night's sleep," Prof de Jonge says.

Exercise is a good way to switch off if it's not too late in the day, otherwise it can spike adrenalin and cortisone levels in the body, making it difficult to wind down and sleep.

Professor Maureen Dollard, Director of UniSA's Asia Pacific Centre for Work, Health and Safety, says that employers need to take some lessons away from the study findings.

"Managers need to create a climate in which working beyond regular hours is not 'business as usual' as taking work home impedes cognitive function and productivity," Prof Dollard says.

"Both managers and employees should find creative ways to accomplish job demands within regular [work](#) hours."

More information: Jan de Jonge et al. Short-Term and Long-Term Effects of Off-Job Activities on Recovery and Sleep: A Two-Wave Panel Study among Health Care Employees, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph15092044](#)

Provided by University of South Australia

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