

# New research findings show an increase in sleep texting

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New research findings from Villanova University's M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing show that a growing number of adolescents and college students are keeping connected to friends into

the wee hours of night, and often don't remember doing so. It's because they're sleep texting.

Elizabeth B. Dowdell, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, professor of Nursing, is the lead author of a new study, "Interrupted sleep: College students sleeping with technology," published in the *Journal of American College Health*. "The majority of the sleep [texting](#) students had no memory of the texting behavior as well as who or what they texted," Dowdell says. "The lack of memory is not surprising as [sleep research](#) has found that people awakened after sleeping more than a few minutes are usually unable to recall the last few minutes before they fall asleep."

More than one quarter (25.6 percent) of the students in the survey reported that they had texted in their sleep; the majority (72 percent) of those specific students reported that they do not remember doing so.

The researchers' findings offer support for the association between sleep texting and sleep quality. In response to an open-ended question on the study's survey, one [student](#) shared that her creative solution to sleep texting was to wear mittens to bed every night to prevent texting since "moving the phone from being in my bed to next to the bed is not an option, I have to keep my phone with me."

Utilization of cell phones and texting have become the main means of personal communication for many people. Texting is especially high in adolescents and [young adults](#) who are exchanging as many as 60-100 text messages a day.

Cell phones are not the only type of technology that [college](#) students use. Attention to laptops, iPads, tablets, and electronic book readers needs to be evaluated. When measuring the amount of sleep during the week compared to the weekend, students with four or more technological devices in their bedroom had significantly less sleep when compared to

those with three or fewer devices.

The findings of Dowdell and coauthor Brianne Q. Clayton, MSN, RN, confirm the typical sleep patterns reported in college students who are partially sleep deprived throughout the week and who use the weekends for sleeping. Lack of adequate sleep may be linked to success in school as sleep disturbance has been consistently rated as a top impediment to academic performance in college.

Having minimal adult supervision, erratic schedules, academic pressure, and easy access to over-the-counter, prescription and recreational drugs, college students can be a population particularly susceptible to the deleterious effects of poor sleep, insufficient and irregular sleep, which can lead to significant emotional imbalance, fatigue, poor concentration and generally lower life satisfaction.

Anecdotally, the older adolescents and college students who sleep text report that most of their messages are gibberish or nonsensical responses to questions. The authors note that the action of [college students sleep](#) texting suggests that the messages being sent are more embarrassing than dangerous, and that those who post are most likely not currently members of the work world interacting with clients, bosses, administration, or fellow employees.

**More information:** Elizabeth B. Dowdell et al. Interrupted sleep: College students sleeping with technology, *Journal of American College Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2018.1499655](https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1499655)

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