

# Social media at bedtime linked to poor sleep and poor mental health for teens

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Teenagers with high social media use at bedtime suffer disturbed sleep, which in turn leads to depressed mood, according to new research from a Murdoch University PhD candidate.

Lynette Vernon, who will present on her findings at the Australian Psychological Society's 50th Annual Conference on the Gold Coast this week, said the research followed [teenagers](#) over a four-year period and found a strong relationship between high [social media](#) use, [sleep](#) disturbance and increased depressed mood.

"Poor sleep can result in students feeling tired and moody, with feelings of sadness and declines in long-term wellbeing," said Ms Vernon.

She added that many adolescents were using social networking sites as a way to feel good.

"Investing in social media for some teenagers improves the way they feel. But overuse disturbs their sleep and leads to tired, moody students who

then invest further into their online connections to help them feel good," she said.

Her research is part of the Youth Activity Participation Study (YAPS) of Western Australia, a nine-year longitudinal study of over 1800 WA young people and their leisure pursuits. It seeks to understand how experiences in sport, performing arts, or social networking can facilitate positive development or exacerbate health risks.

Ms Vernon recorded the social media activities of the more than 1800 adolescents for four years from 2010 to 2014, and each year analysed their sleep quality and their mood, including feelings about things to look forward to, whether difficulties were piling up and how unhappy or depressed they felt.

She said data obtained on social media use included posting on or looking through [social networking](#) sites and rating how invested teenagers were in connecting with their network of friends online.

"We also looked at whether the teenagers got into arguments about the time they spent on social media and whether they felt moody and irritable if they couldn't logon to their [social networking sites](#)," said Ms Vernon.

She said the results highlighted the important role that parents could play in teaching their children to curb their social media use.

"Many parents encourage young children to develop good rituals for bedtime but this study shows that rituals could also be reinforced during the teenage years," added Ms Vernon.

Provided by Murdoch University

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