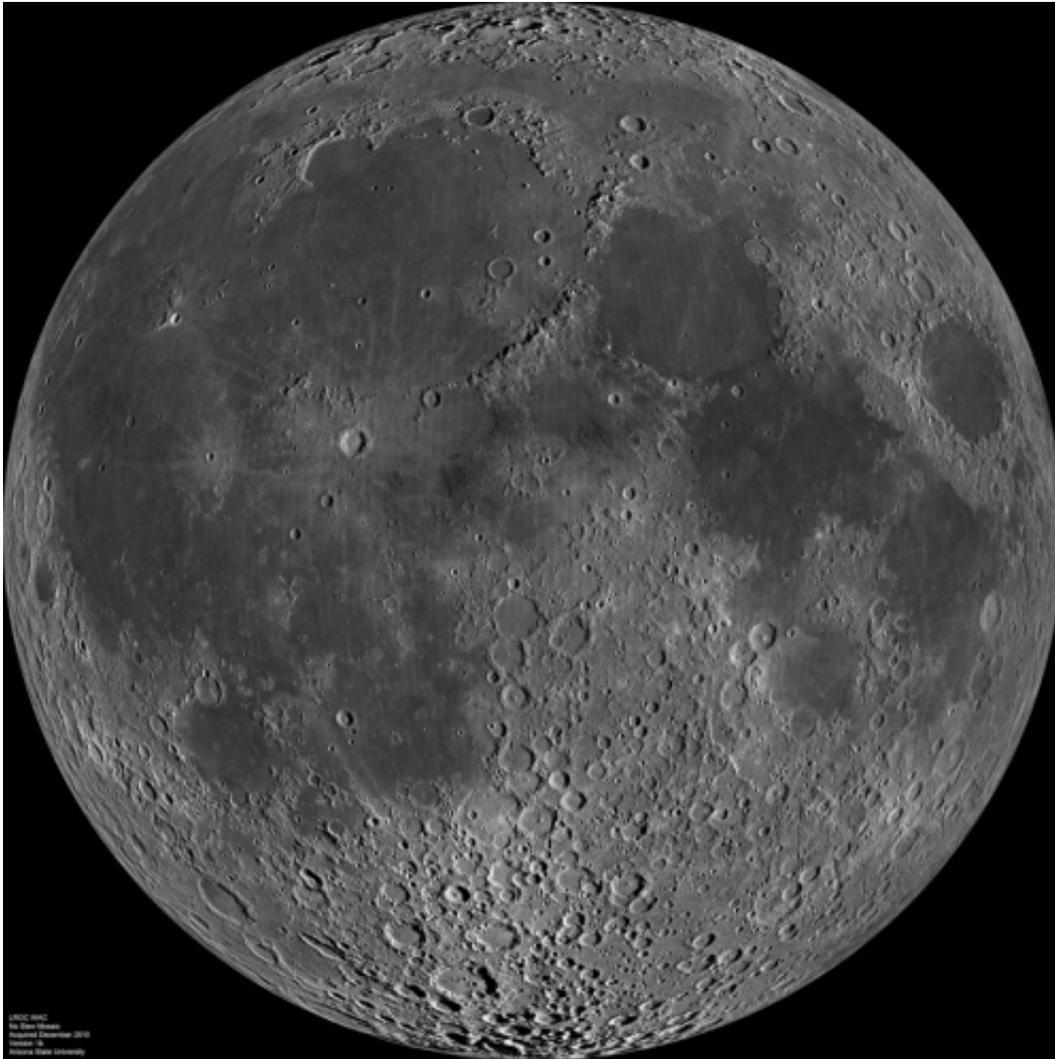


Does the moon affect our mood or actions?

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This is a composite image of the lunar nearside taken by the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter in June 2009, note the presence of dark areas of maria on this side of the moon. Credit: NASA

Always surrounded by an aura of mystery, the moon and its possible influence over human behavior has been object of ancestral fascination and mythical speculation for centuries. While the full moon cannot turn people into werewolves, some people do accuse it of causing a bad night's sleep or creating physical and mental alterations. But is there any science behind these myths?

To establish if lunar phases somehow do affect humans, an international group of researchers studied children to see if their sleeping patterns changed or if there were any differences in their daily activities. The results were published in *Frontiers in Pediatrics*.

"We considered that performing this research on children would be particularly more relevant because they are more amenable to behavior changes than adults and their sleep needs are greater than adults," said Dr. Jean-Philippe Chaput, from the Eastern Ontario Research Institute.

The study was completed on a total of 5812 children from five continents. The children came from a wide range of economic and sociocultural levels, and variables such as age, sex, highest parental education, day of measurement, [body mass index](#) score, nocturnal sleep duration, level of physical activity and total sedentary time were considered.

Data collection took place over 28 months, which is equivalent to the same number of [lunar cycles](#). These were then subdivided into three lunar phases: full moon, half-moon and new moon. The findings obtained in the study revealed that in general, nocturnal sleep duration around full moon compared to new moon reported an average decrease of 5 minutes (or a 1% variant). No other activity behaviors were substantially modified.

"Our study provides compelling evidence that the moon does not seem to

influence people's behavior. The only significant finding was the 1% sleep alteration in full moon, and this is largely explained by our large sample size that maximizes statistical power," said Chaput. The clinical implication of sleeping 5 minutes less during full moon does not represent a considerable threat to health. "Overall, I think we should not be worried about the full moon. Our behaviors are largely influenced by many other factors like genes, education, income and psychosocial aspects rather than by gravitational forces," he added.

While the results of this study are conclusive, controversy over the moon could result in further research to determine if our biology is in some way synchronized with the lunar cycle or if the [full moon](#) has a larger influence in people suffering mental disorders or physical ailments.

"Folklore and even certain instances of occupational lore suggest that mental health issues or behaviors of humans and animals are affected by lunar phases. Whether there is science behind the myth or not, the moon mystery will continue to fascinate civilizations in the years to come," he said.

Read the full study in *Frontiers in Pediatrics*.

More information: Jean-Philippe Chaput et al. Are Children Like Werewolves? Full Moon and Its Association with Sleep and Activity Behaviors in an International Sample of Children, *Frontiers in Pediatrics* (2016). [DOI: 10.3389/fped.2016.00024](https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2016.00024)

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