

Does Technology Affect sleep patterns?

Many of us spend hours each day utilizing technology. Our phones have become an appendage to us. I am guilty of this myself. Earlier today before I wrote this article, I was upset that I had to return to work to retrieve my cell phone. I couldn't go home without it although my work day was over and I wouldn't need it until the next day, I had to go and get it. This blog will discuss how technology can be affecting our children and their sleep patterns as well as the rest of their activities the following day.

Evening screen time can sabotage sleep. Screen time before bedtime may leave people feeling groggy in the morning. Cell phones, computers and TVs emit blue light. And exposure to that bluish light during the **two hours** before bed can keep us from getting a good night's rest, a new study finds. Nov 1, 2017

[Evening screen time can sabotage sleep | Science News for Students](https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/evening-screen-time-can-sabotage-sleep)

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/evening-screen-time-can-sabotage-sleep>

That “glow” from **electronics** is also at work against quality shuteye. The small amounts of light from these devices pass through the retina into a part of the hypothalamus (the area of the brain that controls several **sleep** activities) and delay the release of the **sleep**-inducing hormone, melatonin. Dec 7, 2007

[How TV, Internet, and Other Electronic Devices Impact Sleep - WebMD](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/features/power-down-better-sleep)

<https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/features/power-down-better-sleep>

These two statements show that the use of technology does affect our brain which delays the sleep hormones. Magnify this for a child whose brain is still maturing.

Children are usually active by nature. I smile whenever I see a young girl or boy jumping, skipping, or moving during the day. They seem to have a battery inside of them. I call it the energizer bunny effect. This means the child keeps going and going no matter what. They need redirection frequently. Their mind is constantly moving, and their body responds to this mental stimulation. Even when sitting they are active. It is not uncommon to see young children simply fall off their chair. They just can't seem to be still. What seems to be hyperactivity to others is simply normal behavior of many children.

How does this relate to sleeping patterns you ask? Well, if an active child receives additional stimulation from technology then they are simply told to go to bed and sleep, how are they supposed to do that? Where is their winddown time? In the past and yes, it is still relevant today most parents had a bedtime routine for their children. Forgive my revelation of my age but many television shows had routines. The Waltons all said goodnight to each other and usually ended with Good night John Boy, the main character. Most shows showed children saying night time prayers kneeling besides their bed. Anyone remember: Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Children were ready bedtime stories and the same one over and over so much that even a three- year-old would know it verbatim and if you skipped a part, they would quickly remind you that that was incorrect. Some parents would say they love their child and tuck them into bed and kiss them good night. There was no technology to interfere with this bonding and winding down experience. Kids would usually drift off to sleep without difficulty. Now children sleep with headphones or ear buds in their ears.

There were and always will be children that have sleep difficulty, but today adding technology increases this number. If a teen is up until 1 or 2am on the computer even studying or completing homework, then how ready for the next day can they really be? Are they going to be bright and chipper at 5:30 am when they get up? Probably not. How can a child stay awake during the long school day if they were never truly winded down the night before? Sleep is necessary and without technology at least two hours before they go to bed, they have a chance for the nature process of sleep hormones doing their job properly.

What can we as parents do to support proper sleep habits?

1. Set a good example. ALL technology should end at least two hours before bedtime. Talk to your children and let them know that technology is a good thing but can affect their sleep patterns.
2. Have a central location to dock/store all the phones, tablets and iPad, etc. There are many phone docks for purchase. I keep mine in in bedroom and my children have a place they put their phones in. Then monitor it. Kids can be sneaky at times, but it is easy to see if a spot is vacant of the item that was supposed to be there.
3. Use your security and password functions of technology to assist you. There are apps or programs that allow you to control the time and content children have access to. An example could be using the xfinity app to turn off the internet at a set time. This eliminates arguments about getting your child to turn off or turn in their devices.
4. Praise them for following the house rules and provide incentives or bonus time when they do well. Example: During holidays or breaks many allow and additional hour or on the weekends more time for devices however do still put a limit on it. No child or teen should be on technology at 2am? Nothing is that serious for them at that time. Only sleep should be going on then.
5. Use technology as a family together. Look at a movie on TV together or research a family vacation and allow each child to find a place they want to go and present it to the family. Have a homework time where they can use technology to support their school work. Help them with their school projects. Don't simply allow them access to the computer without setting security blocks and checking to see what they are doing.
6. Know what social media outlets your child is using. This also can cause stress if your child is a victim or a part of cyber bullying. This happens more than most parents know.

Ultimately you as a parent are responsible for providing an atmosphere for proper sleep and rest for your child. Set the example because they follow our lead. Remember to turn off your own technology!