

How Technology Is Changing The Way You Sleep



We've all heard the reports concerning how technology, particularly our phones and tablets, can mess with our sleep cycle through the blue light they emit.

Although there are some very real concerns about how technology affects our rest, not all of it is seen in a negative light, and today I'm going to give you a quick run down of the good, the bad and the very ugly of technology in the bedroom.

The Good

Technology is ingrained into our everyday life with the advancements of high speed connections, affordable internet, instant social connections and even influences how we shop. Therefore, it makes sense that it would seep into our bedrooms in ways we haven't considered or even payed attention to.

Download an App

Since a lack of sleep can negatively affect how we go about our day and wear down our health, it makes sense to look for ways to keep track of a good night's sleep. To get an idea about how you sleep used to

involve doctors and sleep studies, often done away from the comforts of your own home. But with the advancements of innovative gadgets, you can track your sleep patterns on your own, and get a rough idea about how and why you may not be getting enough each night.

Apps can also help wake you using sound and light to bring you more naturally out of sleep rather than a jarring alarm tone, play gentle music or sound to help you drift off to sleep, provide meditation tips, or even walk you through relaxing yoga each night.

Smart Beds

We've all heard about those beds that can be adjusted to your own individualized comfort level, but did you also know that they are now using heart rates, breathing patterns and your movements to help track your sleep patterns to better adjust to your comfort levels? Over time this can help you better understand your sleep habits and adjust your bed accordingly.

Mattresses don't have to have the technology communicating with you though to be taken advantage of. Many companies have changed the way they build their mattresses in order to meet the needs of their consumers. Gone are the days that you have to walk into a showroom to purchase a mattress (although you still can). Modern construction and innovative technology has resulted in a wide range of online mattresses to choose from, providing a transparency and ease to shopping, and provide you with information about your purchases before you decide to try out the product.

The Bad

Most of us sleep with our phones near us and it is the last thing we look at before we drift off to sleep each night. But how many of you find yourself unable to fall asleep readily, or struggling to calm your thoughts in order to get to sleep? If you've ever wondered why you have these issues, look no further than the technology in your bedroom.

Blue Light

Because it mimics natural daylight, blue light emitted from your screens (television included) interrupts the production of melatonin, a hormone that controls your sleep cycle, and interferes with your circadian rhythm. In fact, sleep studies suggest you avoid all electronic gadgets, television included, for at least an hour (if not more) before you decide to turn in for the night to allow your natural production of melatonin to kick and allow your brain to unwind. This is especially true for children.

Does this mean you can't glance at your phone to set your alarm, or even read on your e-reader before falling asleep? No, it doesn't, but you should have an awareness of how having a blue light source in close proximity, and for extended periods, can affect how well you drift off each night. The good thing about this all is that you can have complete control over when, and how you use these gadgets, and as suggested, turn them off at least an hour before you head to bed.

Adrenaline Junkie

Screen time doesn't just affect our melatonin levels; television and gaming get your brain firing and causes an increase in adrenaline, something that occasionally needs an increase in energy to dispel from our systems before we can relax. If your body has received the responses to move, then trying to rest may be near impossible to do- no matter how tired you feel you are. Even when you do sleep after this type of stimulation, it may be restless, and lacking in the deep sleep your body needs to truly recharge.

If you are using the television to fall asleep to, you also aren't allowing your brain to take a rest as it will still be 'tuned in' to the sound and will respond, even if you are unaware of it- causing you to wake feeling unrested. If you have learned to fall asleep with the television on and need the noise stimulus, consider a white noise app for your phone.

The Ugly

What exactly does a poor night's rest mean though? You may think that your bad tech habits aren't that worrisome, or not that important in the long run. You get up and get going each morning don't you?

A true night's sleep consists of 7 to 9 hours of sleep for an active, healthy adult, and not surprisingly, this number goes up the younger the child. On average over one-third of the adult population doesn't get enough rest, so what does this mean to you? Psychologically you will have impaired brain function, will respond slower to stimulus, may become moody or irritable, have memory problems, or even hallucinate.

Physically you gain weight, weaken your immune system, increase you blood pressure, and can open yourself up to a higher incidence of heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. In children the results can become even worse due to a disruption in their normal physical, cognitive, and brain functions.

Technology doesn't have to be the bedroom monster it's misuse can make it out to be however. With a little bit of knowledge and practical application to avoid the pitfalls it can create, technology and the bedroom can happily live in harmony with one another.