

Adolescent Sleep in the Digital Age

Jen Walsh, PhD

Centre for Sleep Science, The University of Western Australia
West Australian Sleep Disorders Research Institute, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital



Conflicts of Interest

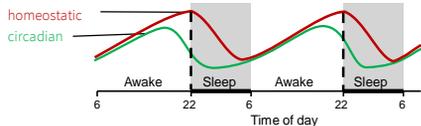
- Collaborations with Oventus, Nyxoah, Zella therapeutics
- None relevant to topic of presentation

Outline

- Physiology of sleep
- Technology & sleep
- Consequences of insufficient sleep in adolescents
- Improving sleep in adolescents
 - Navigating the digital age

Physiology of Sleep

What Makes us Sleep?



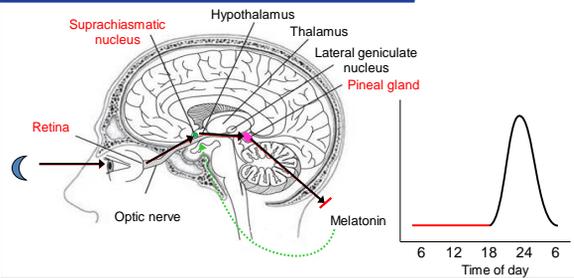
The **homeostatic drive** to sleep increases the more time is spent awake and decreases the more time is spent asleep

The **circadian drive** for wake results from circadian variations in sleep/wake promoting substance(s)

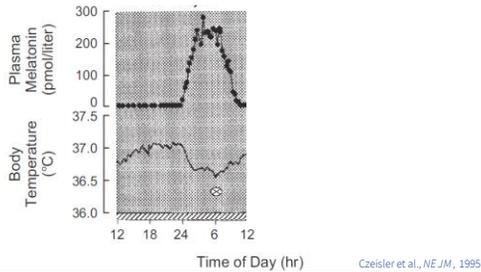
High homeostatic drive + low circadian drive for wake = sleep onset

Borbély et al., *Hum Neurobiol*, 1982

Anatomy of the Circadian System



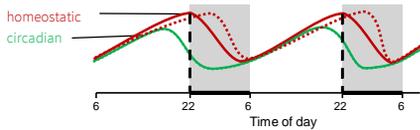
Melatonin & Light



Recommended & Achieved Sleep Duration

- Recommended adolescent (14-17y) sleep duration = 8-10hrs

Adolescent Sleep



- The **homeostatic drive** increases more slowly
 - The **circadian drive** is phase delayed
- ➔ Delayed sleep-wake phase disorder (prevalence 7-16%)

Insomnia prevalence in adolescence 3-12%

International Classification of Sleep Disorders 3rd Ed., AAASM, 2014

Technology & Sleep

Electronic Devices

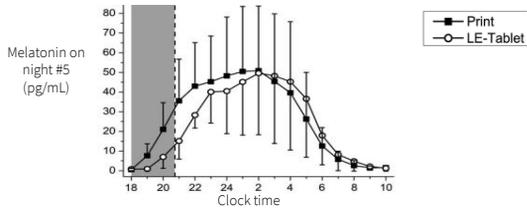
- 28% of world's population own a smart device
- 90% of population use an electronic device (>3 nights/week) within 1 hour prior to bed
- Over 70% of Australian adolescents have 2 or more devices in their room at night (Gamble, *PLoS One* 2014)
 - smart phone (80%), computer (55%), TV (32%)
- School age children spend approx. 7 hours/day in front of a screen (Gradisar, *J Clin Sleep Med*, 2013)

National Sleep Foundation, *Sleep in America* 2011

Light Emitting Electronic Devices

- Electronic devices emit shortwave blue light (400-495nm)
- Sources of shortwave blue light include:
 - Sun
 - Fluorescent & LED lights
 - Flat screen TV
 - Tablets
 - Smart phones
 - E-readers
 - Computers

Light Emitting Devices & Melatonin



- Device use vs reading print delays sleep onset ~30mins

Chang et al. PNAS 2015
Chinoy et al. Physiological Reports, 2019

Electronic Devices: Non-Light Effects

- Acute increase in alertness
- Physical & mental arousal due to the content
- Re-conditions the bed to be a place of alertness
- Device use replaces sleep time

- Smart devices, video gaming, computers have greater effect than TV (more interactive, light proximity to eyes)

Consequences of Insufficient Sleep

Adolescents & Insufficient Sleep

- Accident risk
 - 55% of fatigue-related car accidents are drivers <25y
 - Workplace and home-place accidents
 - Sleep loss exacerbates effects of alcohol
- Increased risk taking behaviour
- Increased stimulant use

Adolescents & Insufficient Sleep

- Increased negative mood & impaired emotional regulation
- Increased future risk of developing depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, attempts & completions (Pigeon, 2012)
- Obesity
- Poor school performance
- Impaired immune function

Improving Sleep in Adolescents

Education

- Sleep education (child & parent)
 - Recommended sleep duration
 - Consequences of insufficient sleep
 - Importance of healthy sleep pattern across lifetime
 - General sleep hygiene
 - Tech. specific sleep hygiene
 - Tips for reducing screen time

Education - Good Sleep Hygiene (I)

- Daily Routine: get up & go to bed at same time every day
- Bedtime routine (eat, wash, teeth, story/read, sleep)
- Exercise daily & consume minimal caffeine (esp. >4pm)
- Deal with 'stress' during the day/early evening
- No caffeine or heavy exercise <3 hrs before bed

Education - Good Sleep Hygiene (II)

- Bedroom comfortable & inviting (cool, quiet, dark)
- Avoid work within 90 mins of bed
- Get plenty of bright light in the mornings
- Restrict naps to 20 mins
- Allow adequate time for sleep

Education - Tech Specific Sleep Hygiene

- Avoid screen time within 60 mins of bed; no screens in bedroom
- Blue-light blocking glasses
- Blue-light screen filters
- Utilise screen time counters/loggers & limits/locks on devices



Alternative Diagnoses, Treatments & Referral

Consider

- Sleep disorders – OSA
- Depression

Where to refer

- Sleep Physician
- Sleep Psychologist
- Psychologist/Psychiatrist

Treatments

- Education
- Light therapy (mornings)
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Mindfulness/relaxation

Bartel, et al., Sleep & mental wellbeing: exploring the links. Vic Health Promotion Foundation, 2018.

Summary – Sleep in the Digital Age (I)

- Chronic sleep loss and its consequences have a significant detrimental impact on the health, academic performance and safety of today's youth.
- Current literature indicates that technology use is the main factor contributing to this sleep loss.

Summary – Sleep in the Digital Age (II)

- Interactive device use (computers, video games and mobile devices) is most frequently associated with adverse sleep outcomes although passive screen time (TV) is also implicated.
- Mechanisms likely include psychosocial stimulation, technology use displacing sleep time and circadian disruption due to blue light exposure.

Tips for Navigating the Digital Age (I)

- Changes in health policies surrounding sleep practices in adolescents are required.
- Primary care givers can directly educate children & parents on the significance of insufficient sleep.
- Tips for parents to reduce children's screen time:
 - Set firm limits/rules on technology
 - No screens in bedrooms (especially before/after bedtime)
 - Set time limits
 - Implement screen-free days
 - Make screen-time a reward

Tips for Navigating the Digital Age (II)

- Tips for parents to reduce children's screen time:
 - Role model healthy behaviour
 - Educate on consequences of excessive technology use
 - Discourage multitasking with screens
 - Encourage physical activity
 - Utilise in-built applications and settings

Additional Resources

- Bartel et al., Sleep and mental wellbeing: exploring the links, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (2018)
- Adolescent sleep needs and patterns: Research report and resource guide. US National Sleep Foundation.
- Australasian Sleep Association:
<https://www.sleep.org.au/professional-resources/health-professionals-information>