

Power Down to Recharge



After spending the day surrounded by technology, our minds need time to unwind. But poor nighttime technology habits are causing us to miss out on critical, restorative sleep. The National Sleep Foundation found more than 85 percent of adults have at least one screen in front of them before bedtime, which can wake the brain up instead of preparing it for sleep.

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?

 **They Suppress Melatonin.** The blue wavelength light from LED-based electronic screens increases the release of cortisol in the brain, which causes alertness and prevents the production of melatonin, which signals to the body it's night and time to sleep. Interrupting this process delays sleep and disrupts our natural circadian rhythms.

 **They Keep Your Brain Alert.** Electronics increase the brain's electrical activity, causing our brain to believe it needs to be awake and focused, instead of calming down into a peaceful state of mind. Many of us get so stimulated and distracted that we end up using technology beyond our usual bedtime.

 **They Trigger Stress.** Simply responding to an email or text or viewing troubling news, videos or Facebook posts can increase the tension in your body. This tension results in stress, causing the body to produce cortisol, again, delaying sleep.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

 **Ideally, Turn Them Off.** Turn off all screens – TV, phone, computer – an hour before you go to bed. Consider setting an alarm to remind you until this becomes a habit. Or start small by powering down 15 minutes before bedtime, increasing the duration until you reach one hour.

 **Move Devices Out of Your Room.** Create a charging station in another room to power your devices over night. Don't keep them on the bedside table. At a minimum, move your phone across the room away from your bed. And consider getting a real alarm clock instead of using your phone as an alarm.

 **Add Blue-Light Filters.** If you do use electronics at nighttime, consider using adding a blue-light filter to your screens, synched to turn on with sunset and off at sunrise. You can also try an app that flips your screen background to show white letters on a black background to reduce light emission.

 **Increase Screen Distance.** If you do use electronics at bedtime, the Mayo Clinic says to keep screens 14 inches from your face and dim the brightness to reduce blue light and increase natural melatonin release.