

## **Three ways gadgets are keeping you awake**

Our mobile phones, tablets, computers and other **electronic gadgets** have become such a huge part of our daily lives that it's often hard to put them down—even at bedtime. Keeping your phone on your nightstand may not seem like a big deal, but technology affects your sleep in more ways than you realize. Whether you're surfing the web, playing a video game, or using your phone as an alarm clock in the late evening, you're probably keeping yourself from a restful night. Learn the facts about digital devices, below, so you can nip your tech habits in the bud.

### **They Suppress Melatonin.**

The blue light emitted by screens on cell phones, computers, tablets, and televisions restrain the production of **melatonin**, the hormone that controls your sleep/wake cycle or **circadian rhythm**. Reducing melatonin makes it harder to fall and stay asleep. Most people will admit to using electronics a few nights a week within an hour before bedtime. But to make sure technology isn't harming your sleep patterns, give yourself at least 30 minutes of gadget-free transition time before hitting the hay. Even better: Make your bedroom a technology-free zone—keep your electronics outside the room (that includes a TV!).

### **They Keep Your Brain Alert.**

It may seem harmless to knock out a few emails before bed or unwind with a favourite DVD, but by keeping your mind engaged, technology can trick your brain into thinking that it needs to stay awake. And if you're surfing the web, seeing something exciting on Facebook, or reading a negative email, those experiences can make it hard to relax and settle into slumber. After spending an entire day surrounded by technology, your mind needs time to **unwind**.

### **They Wake You Up.**

Just because you're not using your phone before bed doesn't mean that it can't harm your sleep: Keeping a mobile within reach can still disturb slumber, thanks to the chimes of late night texts, emails, calls,

or calendar reminders. About 72 percent of children ages six to 17 sleep with at least one electronic device in their bedroom, which leads to getting less sleep on school nights compared with others, according to their parents. The difference adds up to almost an hour per night, and the quality of snoozing is negatively affected too. To get a better night's slumber, parents can limit their kids' technology use in the bedroom, and mom and dad should be solid role models and set the tone by doing the same.