

Telegraph

Mobile phones stop teenagers getting a good night's sleep

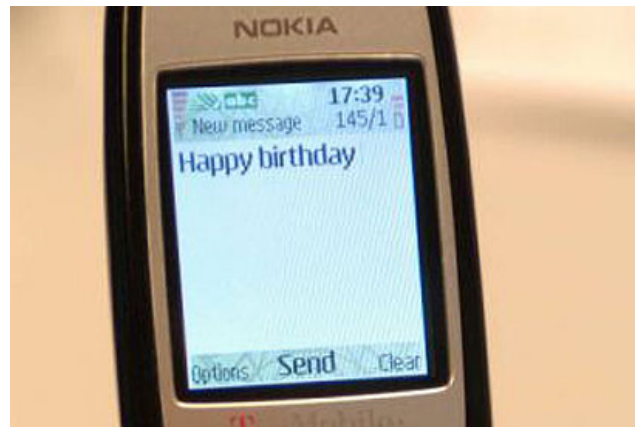
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Teenagers who send more than five text messages or make more than five calls a day on their mobile phones are ruining their chances of getting a good night's sleep, a new study shows.

Young people who often used their phone to text or call their friends were more likely to have trouble sleeping than those who used their mobile moderately. As a consequence "excessive texters" felt more tired during the day and drank more caffeine to help them stay awake.



"Excessive texters" felt more tired during the day

Many young people also felt a "pressure" to be at the end of their phones "around the clock", the stress of which led them to take up smoking or drinking, the team behind the research warned.

The study, presented at SLEEP 2008, the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS), in Baltimore, found that teenagers who used their mobiles often were more prone to disrupted sleep, restlessness, stress and fatigue than other young people.

Researchers at Sahlgren's Academy in Gothenburg, Sweden, looked at 21 otherwise healthy teenagers, between 14 and 20 years of age, who had regular school or work hours and who did not suffer from serious sleep problems.

The volunteers were split into two groups, the first who made less than five calls or sent less than five texts a day and a second group who used their phones at least 15 times daily.

The scientists found that those who used their mobile phones the most were most susceptible to stress and fatigue.

Not only did they find it more difficult to fall asleep than the other group but they also suffered from more disruptive sleep patterns once they finally nodded off.

The study also found that those who often used their phones were more likely to take drinks designed to make them feel more alert during the day.

They were also more likely to feel more awake at night than in the morning, suggesting a delayed biological clock.

Dr Gaby Badre, who led the study, said that those who used their phones the most appeared to have a different, more frantic lifestyle than other teenagers.

Dr Badre said: "Addiction to cell phone is becoming common. Youngsters feel a group pressure to remain inter-connected and reachable round the clock."

Children start to use mobile phones at an early stage of their life. There seem to be a connection between intensive use of cell phones and health compromising behaviour such as smoking, snuffing and use of alcohol."

Getting a good night's sleep was extremely important for young people, she added, and they should be made more aware that excessive mobile phone use can bring with it "serious health risks" as well as attention problems and trouble sleeping.

Jessica Alexander, from the Sleep Council, which promotes healthy sleeping habits, said: "Too many teenagers are stimulating their brains with mobile phones or computers late at night, when they should be settling down in preparation for sleep."

Although adults are advised to get between seven and eight hours sleep a night, doctors recommend that adolescents get nine hours.

However, another paper presented at the SLEEP 2008 conference shows that teenagers often get into a pattern of getting less sleep on school nights and having to "make up" the difference at weekends.