

[IMAGE]

## Losing Sleep in the Electronic Age

By Editorial Staff

If your child has difficulty falling or staying asleep, or seems as if they haven't enjoyed restful sleep even if they've put in a full eight or more hours under the sheets, excessive screen time may be the culprit. Even more concerning, sleep dysfunction may manifest in children as young as the age of 3.

Researchers investigated the relationship between exposure to electronic media such as television, DVDs and computer gaming with overall sleep quality in more than 500 children. Parents were asked about their child's media consumption and sleep habits via a questionnaire when the child was 3 years old. Results, published in the journal *Sleep Medicine*, showed that high media consumption increased the likelihood of poor sleep quality including resistance to bedtime, anxiety over going to sleep and sleepiness during the daytime (presumably from poor sleep quality at night).

According to the researchers, their findings are significant not only because it reinforces the association between electronic media use, particularly in the evening hours, and poor sleep – but also because it suggests even young children can be impacted. The researchers also noted that more than 40 percent of parents reported that they never read books to their children. While non-reading was not evaluated for its influence on sleep quality, it seems reasonable that reading could replace electronic media use and serve as a calmer, less overstimulating method of preparing for a restful, restorative night's sleep.

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