Electronic Device Use before Bedtime

This infographic presents data from a recently published study that uses data collected from South Australian school students in the 2019 Wellbeing and Engagement Collection.

Screen time Guidelines

The Australian government currently recommends children and adolescents should not use screen- based devices one hour before bed.

What did we know before this study?

Children and adolescents who use electronic devices one hour before bed are likely to experience *late sleep onset, shorter sleep duration, less quality sleep and excessive daytime sleepiness.*

Previous research has also suggested pre-sleep electronic device use increases the risk of *obesity, depressive symptoms and poor academic performance.*
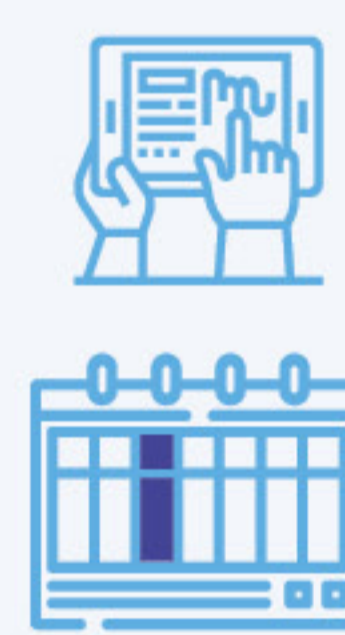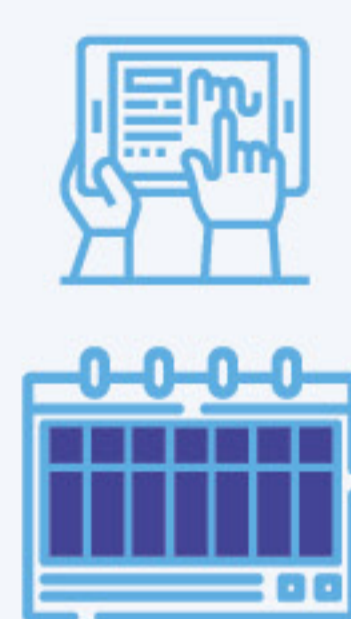
Who was in the study?

70,936 students *aged 8-18 years* from **453** *South Australian government schools*

Students were asked *"How often, in the hour before you go to bed, do you use an electronic device"?*

Key Findings

90% of students *used an electronic device in the hour before bed,* **at least one night a week.**

51% of students *used an electronic device in the hour before bed,* **every night.**

10% of students report *never using an electronic device before bed.*

The impact of gender, grade, socioeconomic status and place of residence on electronic device use before bed
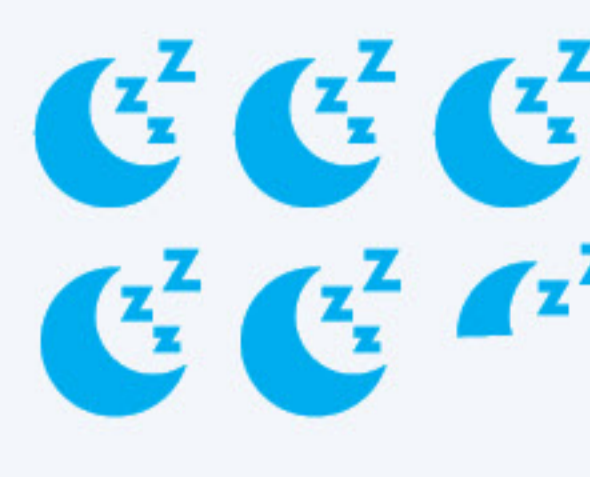
Electronic device use in the hour before bed increases with age, particularly for female students and children from the most disadvantaged communities.
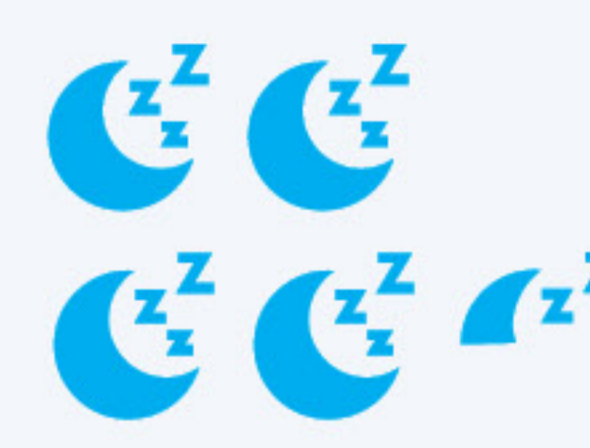
Gender & Grade Level

Results show that in the younger grades, males are more likely to be using electronic devices in the hour before bed, whereas in the older grades it's females who are more frequently using electronic devices prior to sleep.

Students		No of days of the week using electronics in the hour before bed						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Females grade 10 – 12	💤	💤	💤	💤	💤	💤	
	Males grade 10 – 12	💤	💤	💤	💤	💤		
	Males grade 4 – 5	💤	💤	💤	💤			
	Females grade 4 – 5	💤	💤	💤				

Socio-economic Status[1]

Students living in the **most disadvantaged** communities use electronic device – **5.21 nights per week**

Students living in the **most advantaged** communities use electronic device – **4.50 nights per week**

Place of Residence[2]

Major cities – **4.87 nights per week**

Outer and inner regional areas – **4.50 nights per week**

Remote/very remote communities – **4.91 nights per week**

Practical strategies for parents to create an Screen-Free Bedtime Routine

"No Screen" Rule

As little as 90 minutes of screen time in the evening can elevate feelings of alertness and making falling asleep more difficult. Therefore, **turn off all electronic devices 60 minutes before bedtime.**

Establish healthy bedtime routines early in life

It is important to establish a **relaxing bedtime routine** for your child from a young age and continue to encourage this into adolescence. For younger children, this might involve a warm bath or shower and relaxing in their pyjamas. For older children and adolescents, encouraging the use of meditation or mindfulness activities, listening to music or reading a book before bed, as well as avoiding drinks with caffeine in the afternoon and evenings is recommended.

Be a Role Model

Show children you can put down your electronic device. By role modelling healthy screen time behaviour, you will help children to develop healthy boundaries around their own screen use.

Establish Household Rules

Mobile phones and other electronic devices to *stay out of bedrooms at bedtime*

Electronic devices to be *charged in a common family area over night*

Establish *mobile phone and tablet free evenings*
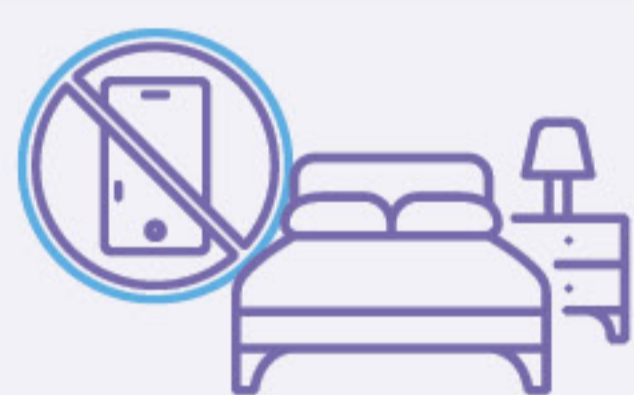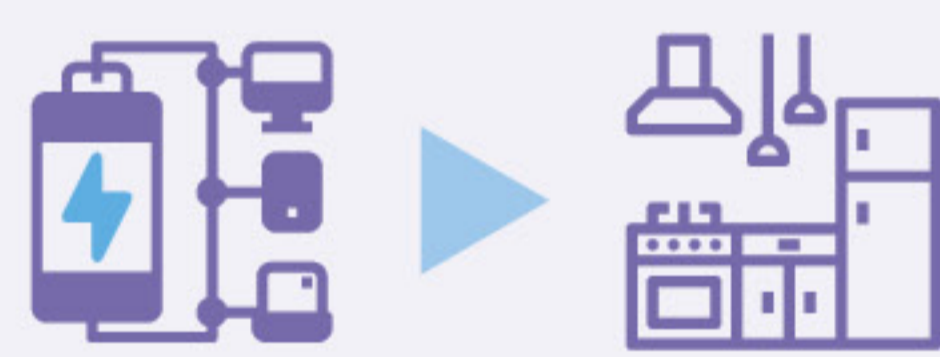
This research highlights the scale of the problem, with 90% of students using electronic devices in the hour before bed, at least one night per week. Given the potential health and education consequences from this behaviour, both health and education systems need to work together to develop innovative public health solutions to better support the children and families of South Australia in reducing their electronic device before bed.

For further information about the research see: Brushe, M.E., Islam, T., Monroy, N.S., Sincovich, A., Gregory, T., Finlay-Jones, A. and Brinkman, S.A. (2022). Prevalence of electronic device use before bed among Australian children and adolescents: a cross-sectional population level study. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.* https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.13214

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[1] Socioeconomic status is based on the ABS 2016 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (SEIFA IRSAD) according to the student's postcode of residence.
[2] Geographic remoteness is based on the ABS 2016 Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) according to the student's postcode of residence.