

# New technology trend: Texting while sleeping

By Philly.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.11.18

Word Count **688**

Level **820L**



A new study from Villanova University found that the habit of using smartphones to message friends while still asleep — and having no memory of doing it — is a growing technology trend among adolescents and young adults. Photo by: Geber86

People are known to walk, talk and eat while they sleep. Now people are sleep texting, too.

Experts at Villanova University in Pennsylvania released a new study. It pointed out a growing technology trend. Adolescents and young adults are using smartphones to message friends while still asleep. And they have no memory of doing it. The paper is called "Interrupted Sleep: College Students Sleeping with Technology."

## **Sixty To 100 Messages A Day**

Elizabeth B. Dowdell is a professor of nursing at Villanova. She was the leader of the new study. Young people are deeply attached to their phones, she said. Adolescents and young adults can send an average of 60 to 100 text messages a day, she said.

Sleepwalking comes from the body's own signals. Texting while sleeping is different. It is usually brought on by outside sounds, Dowdell said.

It's the buzz, beep or tweet that makes the person reach for their phone without thinking about it. That sound gives them a sense of happiness, she said.

The experts interviewed 372 students at two Northeast colleges with an average age of 19.7 years. Three out of 4 of the students were women and 1 out of 4 were men. All of the participants had a smartphone. More than 9 out of 10 of the students reported keeping their cellphone with them at night. One out of 3 students reported that they answered a phone call while they were asleep. One out of 4 students admitted they texted while asleep. Of those, 8 out of 10 were women, the study found.

Men used their phones differently, the experts discovered.

Women in the study were more likely to keep their phone in their bed. Men were more likely to keep their phone next to their bed.

One student started wearing mittens to bed to prevent sleep texting, Dowdell said.

### **Awkward And Silly**

The text messages that were sent are more awkward than dangerous, experts found.

"For most of them it is really silly," said Dowdell. They are texting their friends or peers, not bosses or co-workers, she said.

Just search #Sleeptexting on social media sites like Twitter or Instagram. You are likely to find some recent examples.

Instagram user @adaptablekay recently posted a screenshot of her phone with a #sleeptexting message. It read, "Reptar is made up of macaroni and cheese but it still coming to attack! Can't get cheesy for yoga so just run."

Reptar is a fictional character from the American animated television series "Rugrats." He is a green Tyrannosaurus rex.

People of different ages use their phones in different ways, Dowdell said. Those who are over age 35 tend to use the phone very differently from young adults.

"When that phone becomes an instrument of work, it is not as much fun to use," she said.

### **A Serious Problem**

While sleep texting may seem funny, a serious problem can result. It can cause sleep deprivation. That means you don't get enough sleep.

The majority of the study's participants, and college students in general, were not getting enough quality sleep, Dowdell found. The late nights, early morning classes and 24/7 nature of college life can leave students tired. Many report an average of six to seven hours of sleep a night. Sleep texting can interrupt their quality of sleep, she said.

Students have very unpredictable sleep schedules and sleep habits, Dowdell said. The study said the lack of sleep can affect reaction time, memory and test scores. It can affect emotional balance and generally lower happiness, the study said.

Many study participants reported they started sleep texting during their first year of college. Some said they did it in high school, said Dowdell. She suggested parents have conversations with their children about when it's OK to use phones and how important sleep can be.

There are ways to stop texting while sleeping. Dowdell said to turn the phone off for the night or put it on airplane mode so that incoming texts won't be seen until the morning.

"If the technology is truly interfering with sleep, it is OK to control it," she said.

## Quiz

1 Read the following paragraph from the section "Awkward And Silly."

*"For most of them it is really silly," said Dowdell. They are texting their friends or peers, not bosses or co-workers, she said.*

Which of the following is an accurate explanation of what this paragraph means?

- (A) Sleep texting is usually harmless and does not have huge consequences for young people.
- (B) Sleep texting can be fun and many young kids are starting to do it on purpose.
- (C) Sleep texting is having a big effect on young people's sleep and their studies.
- (D) Sleep texting happens more often with adults because they use their phones for work.

2 Read the section "Sixty To 100 Messages A Day."

Which selection shows that most students have their phones nearby while they sleep?

- (A) Adolescents and young adults can send an average of 60 to 100 text messages a day, she said.
- (B) Three out of 4 of the students were women and 1 out of 4 were men. All of the participants had a smartphone.
- (C) More than 9 out of 10 of the students reported keeping their cellphone with them at night.
- (D) One out of 4 students admitted they texted while asleep. Of those, 8 out of 10 were women, the study found.

3 Which two statements are MAIN ideas from the article?

1. *Sleep texting can make a student's sleep deprivation worse.*
2. *Sleep texting often involves sending silly messages.*
3. *Many students have difficulty controlling their phone use.*
4. *Many young people are engaging in sleep texting.*

- (A) 1 and 3
- (B) 2 and 4
- (C) 2 and 3
- (D) 1 and 4

4 Read the following paragraph from the article.

*There are ways to stop texting while sleeping. Dowdell said to turn the phone off for the night or put it on airplane mode so that incoming texts won't be seen until the morning.*

HOW does this paragraph support the MAIN idea of the article?

- (A) It highlights how often young people are sleep texting.
- (B) It explains some of the problems sleep texting causes.
- (C) It shows that women use the phone differently than men.
- (D) It offers suggestions to help young people avoid sleep texting.