



Significant Sleep Deprivation And Stress Among College Students, USA

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Stress about school and life keeps 68 percent of students awake at night - 20 percent of them at least once a week. Stress affects the quality of their sleep far more than alcohol, caffeine or late-night electronics use, a new study shows.

Not only that, [more than 60 percent of college students have disturbed sleep-wake patterns and many take drugs and alcohol regularly to help them do one or the other.](#)

The study of 1,125 students appears online in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*. It found that only 30 percent of students sleep at least eight hours a night - the average requirement for young adults.

[On weeknights, 20 percent of students stay up all night at least once a month and 35 percent stay up until 3 a.m. at least once a week. Twelve percent of poor sleepers miss class three or more times a month or fall asleep in class.](#)

["Students underestimate the importance of sleep in their daily lives. They forgo sleep during periods of stress, not realizing that they are sabotaging their physical and mental health,"](#) said study co-author Roxanne Prichard, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minn, where the study took place.

[\(Impairments in the immune and cardiovascular systems are health risks associated with insufficient sleep, as is weight gain,](#) Prichard said.

Daniel Taylor, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of North Texas, said, "We know little about the health of this age range even though the consequences - substance use, psychopathology, poor grades, dropout and subsequent unemployment - of sleep disturbance could be greatest."

Of concern to researchers was the students' tendency to use alcohol and drugs to regulate their cycles. Poor sleepers are more likely than good sleepers are to use medication to stay awake or fall asleep, and twice as likely to use alcohol to induce sleep. Alternating between stimulants and sedatives has been associated to a higher risk of addiction.

Prichard said that physicians, counselors and student health professionals should be more aware of and proactive in helping students realize the importance of sleep.

Lund HG, et al.

Sleep patterns and predictors of disturbed sleep in a large population of college students.
J Adolesc Health online, 2009.

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