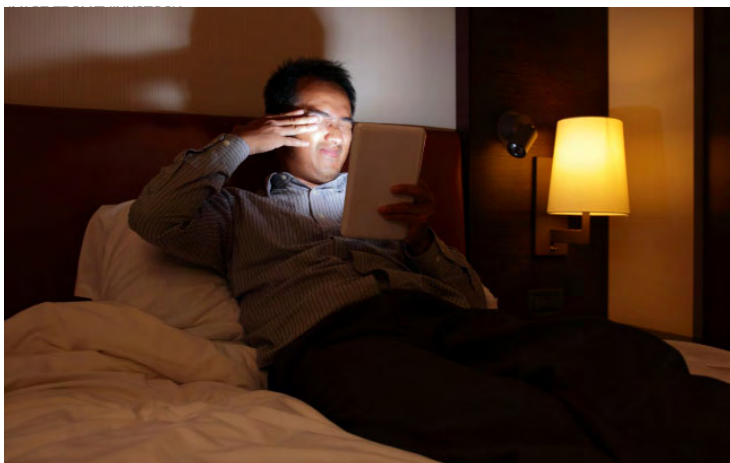


HOW EMAIL HURTS YOUR HEALTH

## 5 Reasons NOT to Check Your Email at Night

Resist the urge to open new messages, and become a healthier, happier guy

BY JESSICA MIGALA TODAY



Smartphones were supposed to provide flexibility to handle business outside the office. But now that we're answering email 24/7, it's cutting into more than our downtime. Constant connection comes with a mess of health problems, from sleep disruption to the moody blues.

Say it with us now: Put down your phone! (Unless you're using it to read this article, of course.) Here are five troubling things that can happen when you keep your email app open at all times:

### 1. You Can't Sleep

Resist the urge to message your boss before hitting the hay. The glow from your device's screen prior to shuteye disrupts your circadian clock and decreases melatonin production, making it difficult to drift off, reports a new study in *PNAS*. Worse yet, it also decreases your alertness the following morning.

### 2. You Feel Down in the Dumps

In addition to stress, the same glow may make you more likely to suffer depression. In a study on hamsters—and yes, we know you're not a rodent, but stick with us—blue light at night scrambled the animals' natural mood regulating systems, while dimmer, less activating red light had no effect on the brain. (See [7 More Ways Your Smartphone Is Ruining Your Life.](#))

### 3. You Start Hating Work

Last year, researchers found a connection between "telepressure"—the urge to answer emails immediately—and burnout, missed work, and sleep issues.

### 4. You Log Extra Hours (Without Getting Paid!)

In a recent study presented at a meeting of the British Psychological Society, researchers revealed that being permanently turned on and tuned into work actually *lengthens* your work hours, putting you in a perma-stressed state that affects your well-being.

### 5. You Hurt All Over

What's that ache? In a German study, half of the 50,000 people surveyed reported working at home at night. Compared to those who powered down after work, people who forewent their free time were 60 percent more likely to report a health

problems. (And your problems don't end with email. Check out **5 Weird Things Work Stress Does to Your Body.**)

### **YOUR ANTI-EMAIL PLAN**

You don't have to go home and disconnect completely. "There was a time I told people not to work after a certain hour, but that age has passed," says **Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC, author of the book *Breathing Space***. If ignoring your inbox provokes anxiety, check it in the evening, but set parameters. Keep your hands off your phone while eating dinner with family or going to the movies with friends, Davidson recommends.

And increase intervals between checking messages, he says. First, look every 10 minutes, then up it to 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes and so on until you can go half the evening without opening your Gmail app. Only answer the vital messages, and leave others for the morning or hit delete. It'll pay off: People who reduced the number of times they logged onto their email benefitted from less daily stress than those who did so an unlimited amount, finds a new study in *Computers in Human Behavior*.

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