

- Screen time

**Declutter
your device**
Digitally cleanse your
devices by unfollowing
social media accounts and
toxic influencers that
don't make you
feel good.

What really happens when you use your **PHONE IN BED**

Can't stop scrolling once you've switched off the lights? Time to change

Health and wellbeing

If your digits often end up doom-scrolling after you've climbed under the duvet, you're not alone. A staggering 74%* of Brits admit to using their smartphones in bed.

And it's no surprise, seeing as there's growing evidence to suggest that we can develop a dependency on them similar to an addiction to alcohol or drugs.

'Humans are born with the desire to connect with others, so it's natural for us to want to use technology which markets that, especially in our downtime, like bedtime,' says wellbeing coach Katie Brockhurst (socialmediaforanewage.com). 'Social media sites use likes, retweets, comments and clicks to flood the brain with the reward hormone dopamine – which can be highly addictive.' It is in many ways the same kind of buzz some people can get from a slot machine.

Want to cut back? Our experts reveal the impact and how you can sort it.

Sleep patterns can be ruined

Notifications, vibrations and the light from your phone can cause you to stay up later and wake in the night.

'It suppresses melatonin production, which can prevent you from reaching deeper, more restorative stages of sleep which are essential for your health and wellbeing,' says Katie. 'Also, scrolling right before trying to sleep stimulates the brain, making it harder to nod off in the first place.'

*** FIX IT** For the best sleep, experts say that phones should be kept separate. 'Keeping it several feet from your bed, or in a drawer, can help minimise disruptions from notifications, lower the temptation to check it in the middle of the night and reduce exposure to electromagnetic fields,' adds Katie.

Phones can cause damage to your eyes

Smartphones emit high-energy blue light, which can penetrate deep into the eye and cause potential damage to the retina.

'Looking at your phone when your surroundings are completely dark can be especially damaging,' warns Dr Deborah Lee from Dr Fox Online Pharmacy (doctorfox.co.uk). When we use our



35%

of Brits say their sex life has been impacted because of bedtime phone use, found a study by Asurion.

It's a passion killer

Using your phone in an intimate setting can lead to feelings of disconnection and sends the message that whatever you're looking at is more important than snuggling up with your other half.

'It brings the outside world into your personal space,' says psychotherapist Eloise Skinner (eloiseskinner.com). 'Scrolling your phone can also make you distracted, anxious or stressed, which can reduce feelings of emotional

or sexual intimacy for both of you.'

*** FIX IT**

If bedtime phone use is necessary or important to either you or your partner, set a time limit before putting them out of sight. 'This shows that you are dedicated to spending quality time together without the distractions of phone use,' says Eloise.

Home screen hack

Set the question, 'What am I here for?' as a written message on your phone's lock screen so you're confronted with it every time you pick up your phone. 'Being faced with the question is a really helpful tool, bringing you an awareness of what you're doing,' says Katie.

phones we also tend to blink less frequently and, as blinking helps keep eyes moist and lubricated, we could be drying our eyes out before bed. *** FIX IT** 'If you can't avoid it, lower the brightness level, switch on a bedside lamp and keep the screen at least 20cm away from your face,' says Dr Lee.

Stress levels rise

Are you one of the 56% of people who say that they're afraid of missing out if they're away from social media too long?**

The trouble is, when we look at social media, we're then made to feel like we're missing out even more.

'People tend to share their highlights – job promotions, weight loss, happy families, glossy holidays, exciting social lives – all of which can leave us feeling stressed and like our own lives are lacking,' explains Katie. 'Looking at these things before bed can compound feelings of inadequacy, which play on our mind at a time when we should be feeling relaxed.'

*** FIX IT** Learn how to curate a personalised social media feed, says

ARE YOU ADDICTED?

Tick three or more? You might need to look at your phone usage

- 1 **Once I pick up my phone I can't put it down.**
- 2 **I always need to have my phone or computer close by.**
- 3 **When I feel sad, angry, lonely or bored, I surf the internet.**
- 4 **Not checking messages, emails or social media for a few hours makes me anxious.**
- 5 **Going online is more enjoyable than doing activities in real life.**
- 6 **I overthink what to post on my social media profile.**
- 7 **I google everything that I need to know.**

Dr Rachael Kent of drdigitalhealth.co.uk. You should delete and report ads you don't want to see, and only 'like' content that nourishes your mental health.

WORDS: SAMANTHA WOOD. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY. *YOUNGOV.STUDY. **MYLIFE.COM. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP