

Rest assured a good night's sleep is key

Routine is crucial for recovery, says **Kilmeny Adie**.

Staring at a tablet or smartphone moments before going to bed may stop you from getting a good night's sleep, according to experts who say technology may interrupt natural sleep patterns.

Eamon Brown, a medical scientist with Sydney's Sleep Centres of Australia, says staring at a bright object such as a smartphone is telling your brain it's not time to go to sleep yet.

"If you're tricking your brain into thinking it's daytime by looking at your iPhone, iPad and these sorts of things, it's not the stimulation you're doing or the activity, it's actually how long you're staring at the light," he says.

"A lot of people say to me, 'That's ridiculous, I can look straight at my iPad for half an hour and go straight off to sleep like a baby', and that might be true to them, but what we will see on an EEG (electroencephalogram) from a science perspective is they'll have a higher amount of alpha brainwaves."

Around one in four people have a sleep condition or disorder, with the proportion rising among drivers and people who are overweight.



Medical scientist Eamon Brown warns against using your smartphone prior to sleep. Photo: FIONA MORRIS

Smartphones and tablets have responded to concerns around sleep by offering a plethora of apps promising a better kip.

Some monitor your movements, others promise to gently wake you in the morning, while others simply play white noise.

Brown says in some cases these apps may be more of a novelty than an effective sleeping tool.

He believes they are still a long way from offering a thorough med-

ical assessment and solution to sleeping problems. "I know how complex a sleep study is," he says.

"A thorough medical analysis is done by a person who is a doctor, who has studied for years and charges you money for a medical analysis. It's not an app."

Gemma Paech at the University of South Australia's Centre for Sleep Research says apps may be useful if only to help establish a sleep routine.

"The best value they have is they help people get into a regular sleep routine so they're going to bed at the same time each night and getting up at the same time each morning," she says.

This practice, known as good "sleep hygiene", is what experts recommended adhering to.

Brown says the best way to get a good night's sleep without medication remains a solid sleep routine.

"Go to bed at the same time

To nap or not to nap

Among the many perks afforded to employees at Google's California headquarters is the ability to take a noon nap in purpose-built sleeping pods. But there are pros and cons in encouraging employees to sleep on the job.

The University of South Australia's Gemma Paech says doctors "loosely" recommend 10 to 30 minutes during the day.

"The problem with naps is that quite often after a nap you can wake up feeling groggy," she says.

"So naps can be good for the short term but for the long-term performance or functioning they're not always the best."

every night and wake up at the same time every morning," he says, and the worst thing before sleep is stimulation.

"Drinking coffee, alcohol, stimulants or drugs. Probably getting into an argument or stressing yourself out or thinking about work," he says.

"When you're in bed, don't think about work, work is for outside the bedroom. Inside the bedroom is for anything else."