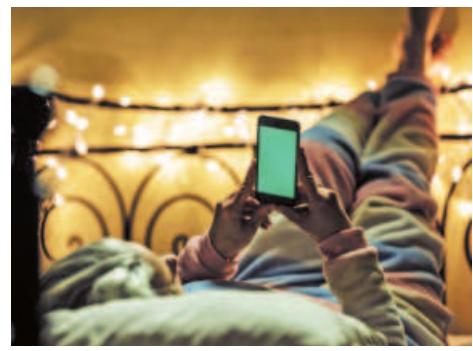


## Scrolling into sadness: How screens disrupt teen sleep and mood

In today's digital world, screens are everywhere—from phones and tablets to computers and TVs. For many teenagers, hours spent online have become a normal part of daily life. But experts are increasingly warning that too much screen time may be affecting more than just eyesight or attention spans—it may also be harming sleep and mental health.

A new study published in *PLOS Global Public Health* has found that excessive screen use among adolescents can lead to poor sleep, which in turn raises the risk of depression—particularly in girls.

Researchers from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet followed 4,810 students aged 12 to 16 for a year. They tracked the teens' screen habits, sleep quality, and signs of depression



at three points in time. The results showed that teens who spent more time on screens experienced worse sleep within just three months. They went to bed later, slept less, and had lower-quality sleep overall.

This disturbed sleep pattern was closely linked to rising depression symptoms over time. For girls, sleep problems explained nearly half of the connection between screen time and depression. Among boys, screen time also disrupted sleep, but it had a more direct (though weaker) link to depression.

The findings support existing advice—like that from Sweden's Public Health Agency—that teens should limit leisure screen time to 2–3 hours daily. Reducing screen time, researchers say, could help improve both sleep and mental well-being in young people.

### STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has officially announced the theme of World Health Day 2025, **Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures**, which will focus on improving maternal and newborn health and survival.

World Health Day is marked around the world on 7<sup>th</sup> April, the anniversary of WHO's founding in 1948. Each year, it draws attention to a specific health topic of concern to people all over the world.

"The focus of this campaign comes at a crucial moment, aiming to help countries regain lost progress while showcasing new research and evidence that will enhance the health of women and babies globally," said Dr Anshu Banerjee, Director of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing at WHO. "It will also be an opportunity to step up support and collaboration for global health—and deliver hope to those in urgent need of lifesaving care."

#### Helping every woman and baby survive and thrive:

According to the most recent estimates, close to 300,000 women lose their lives due to pregnancy or childbirth each year; over 2 million babies die in their first month of life, and around 2 million more are stillborn. This is roughly 1 preventable death every 7 seconds—losses which bring tremendous sadness and heartache to millions of families around the world.

While maternal and newborn deaths occur in all regions, the vast majority are in the poorest countries and those facing conflict and other crises. When healthcare facilities close, are attacked, or supplies are disrupted, pregnant women and babies face severe, often life-threatening risks.

Based on current trends, 4 out of 5 countries are off track to meet



the United Nations' global targets for improving maternal survival by 2030; 1 in 3 will fail to meet targets for reducing newborn deaths. Current funding constraints could further jeopardise progress, as many programmes providing critical health services have stalled alongside important medical research.

This year's campaign, which will run until 2026, will urge governments, donors and the health community to invest in proven, high-impact interventions. These include pregnancy-related services to detect complications and lifesaving emergency obstetrics, as well as special care for small and preterm babies. Complications relating to prematurity are now the leading cause of death of children under 5 worldwide.

WHO will also highlight the evolving need for health systems to address the many underlying health issues that impact maternal and newborn health. These include not only direct obstetric complications but also mental health conditions, malnutrition, and an increasing burden of noncommunicable diseases.

**Listening to women and supporting families:**  
The campaign will urge increased global attention to women's longer

term health and well-being. This includes advocating for laws and policies that safeguard their health and rights, such as paid maternity leave, employment protections, and access to family planning services.

"It is not sufficient that women survive childbirth; they must also be able to enjoy their lives in good health," said Dr Pascale Allotey, Director for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research at WHO.

Efforts are also needed to address the particular risks of climate change for pregnant women and newborns.

**An investment, not a cost:**  
In low- and middle-income countries, every US\$1 invested in maternal and newborn health is estimated to yield US\$9 to 20 in return.

WHO is supporting maternal and newborn health programmes through:

- Intensive support to 55 countries through the Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere initiative;
- Guidance across pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period;
- Research to improve clinical care;
- Support during humanitarian emergencies;
- Strengthening the role of midwives.

Source: World Health Organisation

## Next-gen insulin could ease type 2 diabetes

Living with type 2 diabetes often means constant effort—checking blood sugar levels, planning meals, and injecting insulin daily. For many, this routine can be overwhelming. But a recent study offers hope in the form of smarter technology that can ease this burden.

Published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the study looked at automated insulin delivery systems—small wearable devices that continuously monitor blood sugar levels and adjust insulin doses throughout the day and night. This technology has been available for people with type 1 diabetes for years, but until now, it had not been widely studied for those with type 2 diabetes who rely on insulin.

For people who switched to these



systems, managing diabetes became simpler and more stable. They no longer had to guess how much insulin they needed or worry as much about sudden spikes or drops in blood sugar. Instead, the system did the adjusting for them, helping maintain a steadier blood sugar level throughout the day.

This is particularly encouraging for those who struggle to keep their diabetes under control, even with multiple medications or traditional insulin pumps. The study showed that the benefits were seen across different types of patients—including older adults and those with other health conditions.

While this technology may not yet be accessible to everyone due to cost or availability, it represents a step forward in diabetes care. For individuals managing type 2 diabetes with insulin, it could mean fewer injections, better blood sugar control, and improved quality of life.

## PRE-DIABETES: a second chance to take control of your health

### STAR HEALTH DESK

Many people underestimate pre-diabetes, often dismissing it as a minor issue. But the truth is, pre-diabetes is a critical warning sign—and an opportunity to make lifestyle changes before serious health problems develop.

#### What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. According to global estimates, millions of people are living with pre-diabetes, many without even knowing it. Left unaddressed, pre-diabetes can lead to type 2 diabetes and significantly increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney problems, and nerve damage.

#### Warning signs you should not ignore:

Pre-diabetes often develops gradually and may not present obvious symptoms. However, there are some subtle signs that can signal a problem with blood sugar regulation, such as:

- Unexplained weight gain
- High blood pressure
- Persistent cravings for sugary or processed foods
- Frequent heartburn or acid reflux
- Elevated cholesterol levels
- Fatigue or occasional blurred vision

Recognising and responding to these symptoms early can prevent long-term complications and may even reverse pre-diabetes altogether.



#### Why early action matters:

Pre-diabetes represents a turning point. One path leads toward chronic disease and medication. The other offers a chance to restore health and prevent future illness. The good news? Making small, consistent lifestyle changes can have a significant impact.

Research shows that people with pre-diabetes who adopt healthy habits—such as improving their diet, increasing physical activity, and losing even a modest amount of weight—can reduce their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by more than 50%.

#### Your plan for reversing pre-diabetes:

There is no single "cure" for pre-diabetes, but comprehensive lifestyle adjustments can bring blood sugar levels back to a healthy range. Here are six key steps to consider:

- 1. Prioritise regular check-ups—Routine

blood tests, including A1C, fasting glucose, and cholesterol, help you track your progress and stay informed.

2. Cut sugary beverages—Sodas, fruit juices, and energy drinks can quickly spike blood sugar. Swap them out for water, herbal teas, or unsweetened drinks.

3. Choose whole foods—Limit processed foods, refined carbs, and sugary snacks. Focus on vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats.

4. Move daily—Regular physical activity helps the body use insulin more effectively. Even 30 minutes of walking per day can make a big difference.

5. Break harmful habits—Quit smoking, reduce alcohol intake, and avoid late-night eating. These behaviors can worsen insulin resistance.

6. Stay positive and committed—A positive mindset helps reinforce healthy routines. Set realistic goals and celebrate small wins along the way.

#### The takeaway:

Pre-diabetes does not have to progress to type 2 diabetes. With timely intervention, it is often possible to reverse the condition. By taking control of your health today—through nutrition, movement, and regular monitoring—you can lower your risk of future complications and improve your overall well-being.

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