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## How revenge bedtime procrastination affects your health – and how to avoid it

If you've ever stayed up late scrolling on your phone when you know you should be asleep, you're not alone. You stay awake until the early hours to watch one more episode on Netflix, but when the morning rolls around, you're exhausted. It's something many of us do – and it's called revenge bedtime procrastination.

### What is revenge bedtime procrastination?

The phrase 'bedtime procrastination' was first used in a 2014 study, but the revenge aspect originated in China. It was used to describe how Chinese workers working long shifts would stay awake for longer – and put off going to [sleep](#) – as a way of reclaiming control of their time<sup>1</sup>.

Now, it's something many of us do to get more leisure time, explains [Counselling Directory member and therapist Fiona Austin](#).

"The idea is that we spend so much of our time working, taking care of others and doing things we don't necessarily want to do, that staying up late and indulging in some 'me time' is a way to make up for lost time," she explains.

"If you have a busy day at work and don't get home until late, you might feel like you haven't had any time for yourself," says Austin. "So instead of going to bed at a reasonable hour, you stay up late watching TV or scrolling through [social media](#), even though you know you'll be tired and grumpy the next day."

Staying up late every so often is unlikely to have a long-lasting impact. However, persistently not getting enough sleep is linked to a whole host of physical and [mental health](#) problems, including [high blood pressure](#), [stroke](#), [obesity](#), [anxiety](#) and [depression](#)<sup>2</sup>.

# How to avoid revenge bedtime procrastination

It's easy to fall into the habit of staying up late, but there are steps you can take to break that cycle. Here are some easy ways to help you get a good night's sleep.

## Set a bedtime for yourself

Getting into a routine is important. Although you might have the odd late night, having a routine may mean you're more likely to go to bed at a reasonable time more often.

Start off by going to bed when you're tired and try getting up at the same time every day. Gradually, your body will fall into a pattern. You can also try making sure your sleeping environment is an inviting one so that going to bed is something you enjoy and look forward to doing. Gentle stretches, [yoga](#), reading, [meditation](#) and breathing exercises are all helpful ways to help de-stress and relax before sleep.

"Decide on a specific time to start winding down and stick to it as much as possible," says Austin. "If you're constantly tired, you're more likely to feel the need to reclaim your time by staying up late. Try to prioritise sleep as much as possible, and make sure you're getting enough each night."

## Carve out time each day for you

[Counselling Directory member Jodie McCormack](#) says that making time during the day to do things that you enjoy may mean you don't have to choose between sleep or your favourite show.

"When already pushed for time, this may seem difficult, but it is possible to carve out small moments of joy around a busy day. For example, you can make time for a tasty breakfast, listen to a podcast on your commute or [exercise](#) on your lunch break."

## Set boundaries around screens

Although it's important to give yourself time to catch up on [social media](#) or your favourite TV programmes, try to limit your screen-time in an evening. This will help to remove the temptation to stay up late.

"Set some boundaries around your use of technology in the evening. For example, turning off your phone or computer an hour before bed."

## Further reading

1. [Kroese et al: Bedtime procrastination: introducing a new area of procrastination.](#)
2. [National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: What Are Sleep Deprivation and Deficiency?](#)

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