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Photo: ShutterstockIn a perfect world, it turned off all our electronic devices at least half an hour before bed, took a bath, read a relaxing book, meditated and then went to sleep in our freshly washed lavender-scented sheets. But for me , and for about 60% of Americans, actually, this process involves watching TV while we try to fall asleep. I know, I know: sleeping with television is not just an underrated Billy Joel song: it should also be a terrible habit. We are ordered to remove TVs from bedrooms (or never put one there to begin with), and that's fine, but thanks to streaming services, we can watch TV from our laptops, tablets and phones too, so it's pretty much accessible all the time. And is it really that bad? Because falling asleep on TV is comforting (for some people)Although I can't speak for others falling asleep with high-end TV, for me, a lot of the appeal has to do with my anxiety and PTSD. No matter how many breathing exercises I do, or boring articles I read about, as soon as I feel like I'm about to fall asleep, my brain will play a montage of everything I'd rather not think about: deadlines, failures, sick friends and relatives, politics, superbugs. If I inadvertently offended someone in an email, what happens to our bodies after we die - all the things I try to push out of my mind to be productive during the day. So when I wake up in the middle of the night with lively PTSD flashbacks, I need to visually replace those graphic images with something else, and sticking to an episode of 30 Rock or the Golden Girls helps. According to Rose MacDowell, sleepopolis' chief search officer, I'm not alone. Many people have become accustomed to falling asleep with high-quality TV to block other sounds or distract themselves from thoughts or feelings of anxiety as they fall asleep, she says. Others find the TV sound relaxing, and may struggle to fall asleep in silence. Dear Lifehacker, I like to use my smartphone and tablet in bed. I know screen time before bed... Read moreWhy experts say falling asleep on TV is uglyDo after hearing from a variety of sleep and mental health experts, it's clear they're not fans of people falling asleep on TV. For example, Rebecca Cowan, PhD, a licensed professional consultant, points out that sleep hygiene is important because it is related to our mental well-being. In addition, falling asleep with television can stop the production of melatonin, which is a hormone that is released that helps us sleep well, he explains. In my professional opinion, I do not believe that there is any circumstance in which to have the in service is OK, says Cowan. In the same line, Terry Cralle, a registered nurse and sleep expert with the Better Sleep Council explains watching TV before bed can increase our sleep debt, for example, if we're sucked into a show and keep watching it instead of going to sleep. Also note that our brains still process sounds when we sleep, so having TV all night can interrupt our sleep. Similarly, Mark Burhenne, DDS, author of The 8-Hour Sleep Paradox says that during the sleep phases before deep sleep, our brain is aware of the voices and can respond to them. In dreams that occur in deep sleep, audio can even affect what you dream of, she tells Lifehacker. Burhenne also mentions the blue light emitted by the TV as another drawback, as it is a signal to our brain to stay alert and may prevent us from falling into a deep sleep. In the end, when you sleep, you want to avoid stimulating the brain, he says. Your body needs high-quality sleep to reformat the brain erase it from unnecessary details and consolidate the information you actually need. Blue light before bedtime can make it harder to sleep, and screens on phones, computers and ... Read moreSodor is not suitable for everyoneSure, falling asleep with the TV is not ideal, but not everyone is convinced that this should be a strict rule. For example, Jeanine Joy, PhD, a sleep researcher, says individual differences are not taken into account when sleep recommendations are published. In the same way that there is no perfect specific diet for each person, there is no perfect way to sleep suitable for every person, he says. And yes, for some people, it means sleeping with TV. But Joy says that if a person goes out at the beginning of the day and does some exercise at some point, the blue light from a TV may not do the same to disrupt their circadian rhythm, and they can sleep better with a TV than without it. She recommends using sleep actigraphy to check sleep quality with water TV. If it indicates that you are sleeping well, then you should be fine to fall asleep with water TV, as long as your partner is not bothered by it. There's nothing inherently bad about sleeping with TV if the person sleeps well in those circumstances, he says. In fact, Joy notes that there are a number of scenarios where having TV on while she falls asleep could be helpful. For example, TV can stifle external noises such as barking dogs, sirens, battle neighbors, and gunshots. Along the same lines, Eva Cohen, a certified sleep science coach at Kansas-Sleep, says that for people with mental health conditions like PTSD, distracting from flashbacks with TV shows could help in some cases. But, like most other experts, emphasize that it is better not to watch TV within two hours of going to bed and consulting a therapist to find better coping mechanisms. The blue light of smartphones may interfere with sleep, but there is no evidence that it is Read moreWhat to try instead If you are someone who absolutely cannot fall asleep without the TV and is not willing to try other methods, many of the experts we talked to suggested wearing blue glasses that block the light at night. Although in theory it's great, blue light blocking glasses don't actually do much, and they're not recommended by the American Academy of Ophthalmology either. Instead, Cralle recommends making sure the TV sleep timer is on, ideally for 30 minutes, with up to an hour. It also encourages us to consider what we're looking at as we fall asleep. If you think you need to watch TV before bedtime to relax and fall asleep, watch something boring: no politics, gunfire/violence, or a 'whodunnit', she says. Rather than something that might make you relax or make you want to keep watching, she suggests opting for a low-key situation comedy, even better, a replica you've seen a million times before. But if you're looking to sleep without the TV, what does it serve as an effective substitute? Joy says she prefers to listen to binaural music through headphones instead of TV. Although research is poor, a small study in 2018 found that binaural beats could help improve sleep quality. Others, such as Cowan, recommend falling asleep in a sound machine or relaxing music, while Cralle says others have been lucky enough to fall asleep with audiobooks or podcasts. Rather than focusing on sounds, Cohen suggests trying to channel your vivid imagination by reading fiction stories before bed. This will help you better express your emotions and reduce stress levels, she explains. And if part of the appeal of having the TV on while you sleep is that it also serves as a night light, you might want to look at some of the new sleep lighting options out there, including smart bulbs that reflect your circadian rhythm (like these from GE) or app-activated lighting. All this will probably require some trial and error to find a sleep system that works best for you. And if you're someone who can't sleep without a TV and doesn't affect sleep quality, know that this habit is nothing to lose sleep on. Growing up, I've never been the guy sitting glued to a Nintendo DS, compulsively playing the Oregon Trail on my computer, or watching more than one or two episodes of TV every day. Although my parents had a strict TV-free policy in the bedroom, they were otherwise quite indulgent in the way I spent my free time. Never a troublemaker, I suppose they only trusted me, confidence that I'd much rather ride a scooter around the block about 15 times or choreograph interpretive dances to Vanessa Carlton with my girlfriends (I still have to find those cameras and burn them) than watch TV. As I got older, I went to dance training, I chased the kids, guys, engaging in all other pretentiously teenage activities kept me busy, so I didn't have much time or interest in TV (except for the occasional episode of MTV's Life of Ryan - circa 2008, Ryan Shecker was a non-negotiable). That's why my college addiction to it just a few years later was even more surprising. Now, let me point out (hi, mom and dad) that my addiction wasn't to skip classes to watch America's Next Top Model or say yes to the dress. Sure, my flatmates and I may have looked nonsensically as we prepared or studied, but my problem came before bedtime. Read on to find out how I fell asleep on TV and how I finally put an end to the habit! I've always been a worrier, and the great attempt to solve all my problems (and basically that of the world) usually came to an intense head just like I would settle in bed every night. In an attempt to fix my nerves, my laptop (and its accompanying Netflix account) became my nightly cuddle companion and falling asleep with Mad Men, Gilmore Girls or Orange Is the New Black evolved into an evening ritual. Somehow watching Don Draper's love life crumble was easier than dating about my boyfriend's problems, while Rory's temporary break from Yale made my lack of study seem relatively trivial. Basically, I was using other people's drama to sooth and suppress mine, also letting voices, background music and the sneering light of the screen lull me to sleep. However, fast forward a couple of months, and what I had previously proudly considered the ultimate solution to my sleep problems was suddenly causing a whole host of new problems. That is to say, I was exhausted and unhappy. Sure, I was able to fall asleep with less anxiety, but my time to go to sleep was still late (around midnight) and my alarm was still early (anywhere between 6am and 7am.m.). Yes, I technically recorded six to seven hours, but my sleep quality was completely turned around. Without fail, I would wake up a few hours after drifting and be forced to turn off any light, turn off the TV/turn off my laptop, go to the bathroom, etc. Once I finally fell asleep, around 2 or 3 o'clock in the .m., I would usually wake up once or twice before my alarm really went off. So when I had to get up really, I was the exact opposite of well rested and couldn't drag myself to Keurig fast enough. And by noon? You might find me in bed taking a midday nap (and by nap I mean a semi-comatose state three hours long) or at desperately ordering an extra-strong American. I was constantly sick (or convinced I was sick, due to my perennial tiredness), and despite my commitment to regular exercise and a healthy, clean diet, I felt completely unhappy. The culprit? My evening TV habit, which was totally messing with circadian of my body and basically sending my hormones and my nervous system into a tailspin. In the end, enough was enough, and in the second half of last year, I made some serious changes. Six months later, I've been sleeping better for years, my energy levels have drastically improved, and most importantly, I'm a much happier, healthier me. Keep scrolling for my tips and tricks! Much easier said than done, but the more you can make your days, the better. Yes, life can get in love, but settle in bed (sans laptops or gadgets) at about the same time each night and setting the alarm for the same time each morning will help your body get back into a healthy sleep schedule. Understood. The coffee is amazing. It was (and probably always will be) one of my greatest loves in life. However, limiting your daily intake can have a surprising effect on the quality of sleep you're recording. I left the turkey cold (and completely abstained for two months) in an attempt to sleep better. I won't lie: those first two days were completely brutal, as in I was practically curled up on my bed for 48 hours. However, after a couple of days, my energy levels started to improve and I was able to fall asleep much faster than ever: no House of Cards marathon to talk about. In the end, since I love coffee and don't believe in a restrictive lifestyle, I reincorporated it into my life. However, I now limit myself to one cup (decaffeinated if possible) three to four times a week. This can vary from person to person, but when I swapped my morning workouts for post-afternoon classes, sleep came much easier. Naturally tired of my evening muscle burn, my body and mind felt much more eager to turn themselves in for the night (no TV buffer time), and I noticed better sleep quality with fewer midnight wake-up calls. Olly Restful Sleep Gummies \$12 HoMedics SoundSpa Store Portable Audio Machine \$18 Store

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