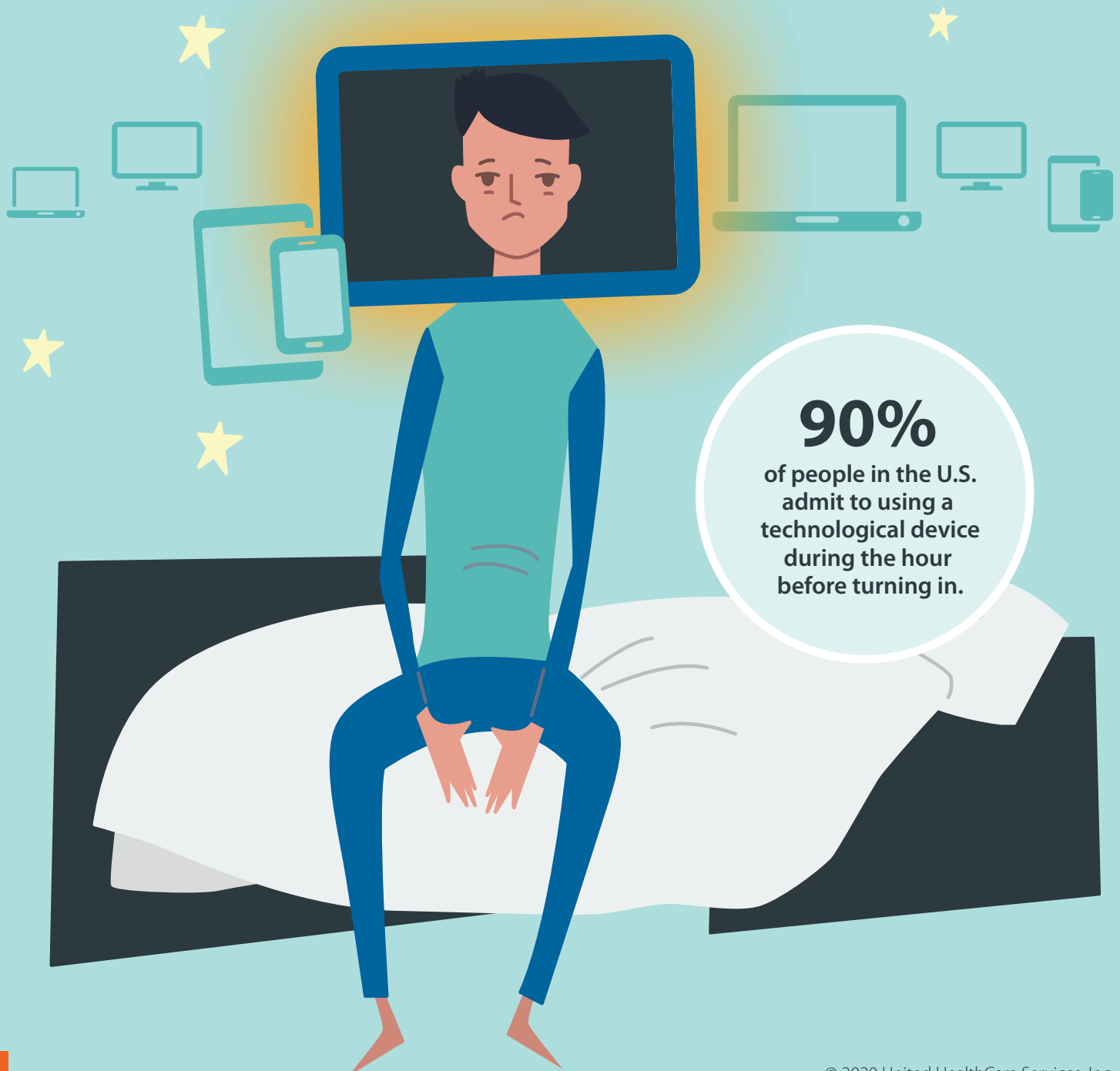


Screens and sleep

Know the negative effects

While a bad night of sleep here and there may just leave you tired and grumpy, people who regularly don't get enough sleep are at greater risk for illness and chronic diseases. After several nights of losing sleep – even a loss of just 1–2 hours per night – your ability to function suffers as if you haven't slept at all for a day or two.

One in three people suffer from poor sleep, with screens bearing more and more of the blame. Let's look at the role tech can play in hindering healthy sleep habits.





Blue light battles

The blue light emitted by screens suppresses melatonin, an important hormone that tells your body it's time to sleep – and helps you stay asleep. That's why it's important to avoid bright lights and screens at least 30 minutes before your bedtime. This includes smartphones, tablets, laptops and TVs.

Newer devices have night modes that can filter or turn off blue light during a set time period. And you can buy eyeglasses, with or without a prescription, that help block blue light. While avoiding electronics before bedtime is best, blocking the blue light is helpful if you can't disconnect. If you like to read before bed, choose an e-ink e-reader or a good old-fashioned book.



Brain drain

The stimulation technology provides makes it difficult for your brain to wind down and prepare for sleep. If you're watching a show, surfing social media or catching up on email right up until bedtime, your brain stays engaged and is tricked into thinking you need to remain alert. And that makes it hard to relax, especially when you unexpectedly see or read something that's upsetting or exciting.



Social stress

Many people feel beholden to their devices and can't resist checking notifications or responding to messages no matter what time it is. But constant connectivity takes an emotional toll, which can lead to stress, anxiety and even depression. It's important to set boundaries with the people and technology in your life, and bedtime is the best place to start. If certain people need to be able to reach you 24/7, set up special ring or text tones for them, or allow messages from them to come through when Do Not Disturb is enabled.

Remember: You are in control. Even if people can reach you day and night, you are not obligated to respond immediately.



Binging and buzzing

It's tempting to crawl under the covers with your device, especially if you use it as an alarm clock, relaxation tool or sleep monitor. If that's the case, put it out of reach when you turn in for the night so you won't be tempted to pick it back up. Features like Do Not Disturb allow you to silence notifications during certain hours so your device won't buzz or chime when you receive notifications.

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4 key components to healthy sleep

1. A sufficient amount of sleep
2. The proper number of age-appropriate naps
3. Uninterrupted, quality sleep
4. A sleep schedule that's in sync with your natural biological rhythms