



Academics are seeking those who have had a problem sleeping recently as well as 'good sleepers' to take part in the study

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## **Sleep research programme to offer free treatment to those suffering with disturbed sleep amid the pandemic**

**Those experiencing poor sleep during the COVID-19 pandemic are being invited to take part in an online treatment study run by sleep experts at Northumbria University.**

It is widely acknowledged that sleeping well is vital for physical and mental health and wellbeing, yet research shows that stressful life events can cause a short-term disruption to sleep. Such disruption can lead people to

compensate, for example by spending too long in bed, or becoming preoccupied with the daytime consequences of this poor or disturbed sleep. Over time, experts say this can create long-term sleep problems such as insomnia.

A recent review of COVID-19 sleep research studies, which encompassed over 50,000 people from 13 countries, indicates that around 40% of people have experienced sleep problems caused by COVID-19. Meanwhile approximately three-quarters of COVID-19 patients have experienced sleep disruption.

However, psychologists from [Northumbria Sleep Research](#) (NSR) believe that by intervening early, short-term sleep disruption can be stopped. In turn, they say this is likely to prevent short-term sleep disturbance from becoming a long-term problem.

To investigate this, NSR have launched a study which uses an online treatment, in the form of sleep education, to try and treat short-term sleep problems in people who have recently reported having poor sleep, particularly as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This involves participants being provided with information which suggests ways in which they can change their behaviour to avoid poor sleep from becoming a longer-term problem. Sleep experts at Northumbria have previously used a similar method with people who have long-term sleep problems (insomnia) and it has proven to be effective.

Now, academics are exploring if this form of education treatment is effective in the short-term - one week after receiving the information, and longer-term - one and three months later.

[Dr Greg Elder](#), Senior Lecturer in Psychology and Associate Director of Northumbria Sleep Research, says “We know that more and more people are developing problems with their sleep during the pandemic. This is partly due to changes to our lifestyle, which can include spending more time at home and working in the bedroom. We want to use an online version of an established treatment to intervene early and stop short-term sleep problems from becoming a more serious long-term problem. We also want to target good sleepers and prevent sleep problems from happening in the first place.”

**Who can take part in the study?**

The research team are looking for people who are 18 years of age or over, who have access to the internet and who can understand written English, as the study treatment will be delivered online in English.

Academics are seeking those who have had a problem sleeping recently - within the last two weeks to three months.

Additionally, the team are looking for 'good sleepers' – those who do not report having problems with their sleep, because they also aim to understand if this intervention can prevent sleep problems from happening in the first place.

[Further information for participants and how to take part can be found here.](#)

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