

The "Nocebo" Effect: Is Your Wearable Tech Making You Sick?

Summary

Wearable trackers (like Oura, Whoop, and Apple Watch) are fantastic tools, but they can cause "Orthosomnia"—an unhealthy obsession with perfect sleep data. Seeing a bad "readiness score" in the morning can create a self-fulfilling prophecy where you *feel* tired just because your watch told you to. Use the data as a trend line, not a daily diagnosis.

You wake up feeling refreshed. The sun is shining. You grab your phone to check your sleep tracker... and it says your "Readiness Score" is a dismal 45%. Suddenly, you feel groggy. You decide to skip the gym because your watch said you aren't recovered.

Welcome to the **Nocebo Effect** of wearable tech.

Data Overload

The "Placebo Effect" is when a fake treatment makes you feel better. The "Nocebo Effect" is the opposite: negative expectations make you feel worse. Sleep specialists are seeing a rise in **Orthosomnia**—a condition where the pursuit of "perfect" sleep data actually causes anxiety and insomnia. People lie in bed stressed about their heart rate variability (HRV) instead of actually sleeping.

You Are Not a Battery

Your tracker is an algorithm, not a doctor. It can misread data if you moved your arm, if the strap was loose, or if you drank alcohol.

- **The Fix:** If you find yourself checking your score before checking in with your own body, take a break.
- **Hide the Score:** Some apps allow you to hide the daily metric and only look at weekly trends.
- **Listen to Your Body First:** If your watch says you slept poorly, but you feel great—believe your body. If your watch says you are "primed to train," but you feel exhausted—rest.

Technology is a great servant, but a terrible master. Don't let a wrist strap dictate your mood for the day.

Sources Cited:

- Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine. (2017). *Orthosomnia: Are Some Patients Taking the Quantified Self Too Far?*
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- Sleep Foundation. (n.d.). *Orthosomnia.*