

Parents spending any part of the night with their infants report poor sleep

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Parental adaptation to infant sleep was poorer when infants spent any part of the night with their parents, even when parents endorsed bedsharing, according to a research abstract that will be presented on Monday at SLEEP 2008, the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS).

The study, authored by Molly Countermine, of Penn State University, focused on 45 families with infants between one and 24 months. Parents completed measures of parental cognitions about infant sleep and attitudes and practices regarding sleep arrangements. A measure of adaptation to infant sleep was derived from five items that inquired about parents' satisfaction with infants' sleep location, and bedtime and nighttime behavior.

The results showed that the adaptation scores of both fathers and mothers were highly correlated. Parents whose infants spent any time with them at night had poorer adaptation scores than did parents who slept separately from their infants. Parents with more lenient attitudes toward bedsharing spent more time with their infants at night than did parents with less lenient attitudes. Interestingly, however, more lenient attitudes toward bedsharing were associated with poorer adaptation in both mothers and fathers.

"In a culture that is typically not accustomed to co-sleeping, parents who choose to co-sleep for their child's well-being may be doing so at their own expense," said Countermine.

It is recommended that adults get seven to eight hours of nightly sleep, infants 14-15 hours and toddlers 12-14 hours.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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