

# Genetic link found between anxiety, depression and insomnia

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The genes that play a role in adolescent insomnia are the same as those involved in depression and anxiety, according to a research abstract that will be presented at SLEEP 2009, the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies.

Results of the study indicate that [insomnia](#) as a diagnosis has a moderate heritability in 8 to 16 year olds, which is consistent with past studies of insomnia symptoms in adults. Significant genetic effects shared between insomnia, depression and anxiety suggests that overlapping genetic mechanisms exist to link the disorders.

According to lead author Phillip Gehrman, PhD, assistant professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School Of Medicine, researchers involved in the study were surprised that they did not find sleep-specific genetic effects.

"Monozygotic twins did not have higher rates of insomnia. However, if one monozygotic twin had insomnia, their twin was more likely to have insomnia than if they were dizygotic twins."

The sequential cohort study included data from 749 monozygotic twin pairs and 687 dizygotic twin pairs between the age of 8 and 17 and their parents. Mean age was 11.9. Twins and their parents completed the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Assessment (CAPA), and DSM-III-R criteria was used to assess insomnia, depression and anxiety. Criteria for insomnia were met by 19.5 percent of the sample.

Findings of the study suggest that adolescents who are suffering from anxiety and [depression](#) should also be screened for insomnia.

More information about children and sleep is available from the AASM at <http://www.sleepeducation.com/Topic.aspx?id=8>.

Source: American Academy of [Sleep](#) Medicine ([news](#) : [web](#))

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