

Childhood parasomnias such as sleepwalking and bedwetting may persist into adolescence

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Although incident parasomnias are uncommon as children enter adolescence, parasomnias present in preadolescents may persist into the teen years, according to a research abstract that will be presented Monday, June 7, 2010, in San Antonio, Texas, at SLEEP 2010, the 24th annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies LLC.

Results indicate that the rate of persistence after five years was 29 percent for children with bedwetting and 27 percent for children with sleepwalking. The overall prevalence for these parasomnias was 2.6 and 3.1 percent respectively. The study also found that the incidence rate for new cases of sleepwalking was 3.2 percent during the follow-up period, while the incidence rate for new cases of bedwetting was less than one percent.

"Current wisdom was that most of these behaviors remitted by adolescence," said principal investigator Stuart F. Quan, MD, professor emeritus of medicine at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Ariz. "Our data indicate that in a number of children, they will persist. Because parasomnias such as sleepwalking can be injurious as children grow older, parents need to be cognizant and be prepared to protect them from injury."

Quan added that bedwetting can be an embarrassing problem for adolescents. However, a variety of treatments are available, and in most cases the problem will abate by adulthood. Parents can get help for their child's or teen's [sleep problems](#) at an AASM-accredited sleep disorders

center.

The study involved 310 children in the Tucson Children's Assessment of [Sleep Apnea](#) Study (TuCASA), a prospective cohort study that enrolled children between the ages of 6 and 11 years for an initial assessment. The children were studied again after a mean interval of 4.6 years. At both time points parents were asked to complete comprehensive sleep habits surveys.

Results also show that all cases of sleep terrors remitted by adolescence. The most common problem was sleep talking, which had a prevalence rate of 22.3 percent and persisted into adolescence in 46 percent of cases. However, Quan noted that sleep talking typically is a minor hindrance that requires no treatment.

In The International Classification of Sleep Disorders, Second Edition, published by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine in 2005, sleepwalking, sleep terrors and bedwetting - also called "sleep enuresis" - are classified as parasomnias. This group of 12 [sleep disorders](#) involves undesirable behaviors that occur while falling asleep, during sleep or while waking up.

[Children](#) who sleepwalk may walk toward a window or even go outside, which can put the child at risk. During an episode of sleep terrors, a child sits up in bed with a look of intense fear and makes a piercing scream or cry. Bedwetting is considered to be a sleep disorder only when it occurs at least twice a week during sleep after 5 years of age.

Sleep talking - also called "somniloquy" - is classified as a normal variant. It is often associated with parasomnias and can occur with varying degrees of comprehensibility.

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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