

Poor sleep linked to increased health and behavior problems in young diabetics

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A new study suggests that young diabetics may be struggling to get a good night's sleep, resulting in worse control of their blood sugar, poorer school performance and misbehavior.

"Despite adhering to recommendations for good diabetic health, many youth with Type 1 diabetes have difficulty maintaining control of their blood sugars," said Michelle Perfect, PhD, the principal investigator in the study. "We found that it could be due to abnormalities in sleep, such as daytime sleepiness, lighter sleep and [sleep apnea](#). All of these make it more difficult to have good [blood sugar control](#)."

The study, appearing in the January issue of the journal *Sleep*, tracked the [sleep health](#) of 50 Type 1 diabetics, ages 10 to 16. Perfect and her colleagues compared that data with a similar control group. They found that the young diabetics spent more time in a lighter stage of sleep than youth without diabetes, which was related to compromised school performance and higher [blood sugar levels](#).

"[Sleep problems](#) were associated with lower grades, poorer performance on state standardized tests, poor quality of life and abnormalities in daytime behavior," Perfect said. "On the upside, sleep is a potentially modifiable health behavior, so these kids could be helped by a qualified professional to get a better night's sleep."

Perfect and colleagues also found that nearly one-third of the youths in their study had sleep apnea, regardless of weight. Sleep apnea is

associated with Type 2 diabetes, often referred to as adult-onset diabetes. These young participants with sleep apnea showed significantly higher blood sugar levels – the same pattern linked to adults.

"Sleep apnea and its impact may not be confined to older people with diabetes, we don't know," she said. "It's something that needs to be looked at again."

More information: "Sleep, Glucose, and Daytime Functioning in Youth with Type 1 Diabetes," *Sleep*.

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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