

# Adolescents with sleep problems more likely to self-harm

July 29 2015

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Credit: xiaphias/Wikipedia

There is a strong relationship between sleep problems such as insomnia, and self-harm, according to findings in a new Norwegian study.

The study is led by psychology specialist Mari Hysing from Uni Research in Bergen, and published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*.

Adolescents with [sleep problems](#) were significantly more likely to report [self-harm](#) than those without sleep problems, the researchers report.

In order to assess the relationship, a large population-based study was conducted, based on data from the unique material in the youth@hordaland survey.

The data included self-reports from 10,220 teenagers (16-19 years old) in Western Norway on [mental health](#), including a comprehensive assessment of sleep and self-harm.

A total of 702 (7.2%) met the criteria for self-harm, and more than half (55%) of those reported harming themselves on two or more occasions.

Insomnia, short sleep duration

- Self-harming occurs more frequently among girls than boys, and cutting is most prevalent, Hysing says.

Furthermore, the risk of self-harming was 4 times higher among the 16-19 years old adolescents who fulfilled the diagnostic criteria for [insomnia](#).

"Insomnia, short sleep duration, long sleep onset latency, wake after sleep onset as well as large differences between weekdays versus weekends, yielded higher odds of self-harm consistent with a dose-response relationship", the researchers point out.

The other researchers contributing on the study are Børge Sivertsen (Norwegian Institute of Public Health and Uni Research) and Kjell Morten Stormark (Uni Research and University of Bergen) - and Rory C. O'Connor (University of Glasgow, Scotland).

Depression and ADHD symptoms

Adolescents who reported self-harm had, as expected, higher rates of both depression, signs of perfectionism, as well as ADHD symptoms.

The researchers say that depressive symptoms accounted for some, but not all, of the association to self-harming. However, the latter association remained significant even in the fully adjusted analyses, they emphasize.

To prevent adolescents from self-harming, the researchers suggest interventions such as incorporating healthy sleeping habits as a part of the treatment.

- Both health care professionals and other people should be aware of the fact that good [sleep](#) routines can prevent both stress and negative emotions. Sleep regulation is one of the factors one should consider to use in preventing and treating self-harm among young people, Mari Hysing says.

**More information:** "Sleep problems and self-harm in adolescence." The *British Journal of Psychiatry*. July 2015. [DOI: 10.1192/bjp.bp.114.146514](#)

Provided by Uni Research

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