

# Sleep variables affecting school performance are different with each educational level

9 June 2008

While disordered sleep has a negative effect on a student academically, the sleep variables affecting school performance are different by educational level, 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 James Pagel, MD, of the University of Colorado, focused on 98 junior high, 67 high school, and 64 college students.

“Disordered sleep has significant deleterious effects on school performance,” said Dr. Pagel. “The sleep complaints most likely to affect school performance change with age and educational status. Poorly performing junior high students are most likely to report restless legs at sleep onset. High school students reporting daytime sleepiness have the poorest levels of school performance. Low performing college students are significantly more likely to have trouble with sleep onset insomnia, complaining that they have more difficulty falling asleep than students with higher grade point averages.”

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is when you have a strong urge to move your legs. This urge is very hard to resist. It often comes with other uneasy feelings deep inside the legs.

The urge to move the legs grows worse at night and eases in the morning. RLS makes it very hard for you to rest or go to sleep. People with severe RLS may get less than five hours of sleep each night. This total sleep time is lower than with almost any other sleep disorder. It can occur at any age, from early childhood to late adult life. RLS has an “early onset” when it starts before the age of 45.

It is recommended that adults get seven to eight hours of nightly sleep, adolescents nine hours, and school-aged children between 10-11 hours.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) offers the following tips on how to get a good night’s sleep:

- Follow a consistent bedtime routine.
- Establish a relaxing setting at bedtime.
- Get a full night’s sleep every night.
- Avoid foods or drinks that contain caffeine, as well as any medicine that has a stimulant, prior to bedtime.
- Do not stay up all hours of the night to “cram” for an exam, do homework, etc. If after-school activities are proving to be too time-consuming, consider cutting back on these activities.
- Keep computers and TVs out of the bedroom.
- Do not go to bed hungry, but don’t eat a big meal before bedtime either.
- Avoid any rigorous exercise within six hours of your bedtime.
- Make your bedroom quiet, dark and a little bit cool.
- Get up at the same time every morning.

Those who suspect that they might be suffering from RLS, or another sleep disorder, are encouraged to consult with their primary care physician or a sleep specialist.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

APA citation: Sleep variables affecting school performance are different with each educational level (2008, June 9) retrieved 27 November 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-06-variables-affecting-school.html>

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