

Sleep disorders are largely underdiagnosed in pediatric patients

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Primary care pediatricians may be under-diagnosing sleep disorders in children and teens, according to new research.

The study obtained data from 32 primary care pediatric practices affiliated with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Information was gathered by chart review for 154,957 patients, ranging in age from 0 to 18 years. Results show that less than four percent (5750 children) were diagnosed with a [sleep disorder](#). The most common diagnoses were [sleep disorders](#) that are "not otherwise specified" (1.42 percent), enuresis - or bedwetting (1.24 percent), sleep disordered breathing (1.04 percent), and [insomnia](#) (0.05 percent).

According to lead author Lisa Meltzer, PhD, the rate of diagnosis found in this study is significantly lower than prevalence rates reported in epidemiological studies.

"Sleep is often discussed during check-ups for young children, but it may not come up as a topic with teenagers, resulting in an under diagnosis of sleep disorders for this group of [adolescents](#)," said Meltzer. "Pediatricians should ask about sleep during every well-child visit. Children who snore, have problems falling asleep, are difficult to wake in the morning, or who fall asleep in school should be further evaluated for sleep disorders."

Because sleep problems in children can have a major impact on learning, growth and development, the authors advise that it is important for

pediatricians to receive education and support in the diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), some signs that your child may have a sleep problem include:

- You spend too much time "helping" your child fall asleep
- Your child wakes up repeatedly during the night.
- Your child snores very loudly or struggles to breathe during sleep.
- Your child's behavior, mood or school performance changes.
- Your child who used to stay dry at night begins to wet the bed.

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

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