

New Findings on Sleep in Children, Older Adults



VOA
A mother and her baby

This is the VOA Special English Health Report.

"Sleep-disordered breathing" is a term for a group of conditions that can interfere with normal breathing while people sleep. These include snoring, mouth-breathing and sleep apnea. Sleep-disordered breathing can do more than just leave people feeling tired the next day. It can also affect people's health. In children the effects can include behavioral and emotional problems.

In a new study, researchers asked parents about their children's breathing from when they were babies up to about age six. The parents also answered questions about behavior at ages four and seven. The study involved about eleven thousand children.

Karen Bonuck at the Einstein College of Medicine in New York led the study.

KAREN BONUCK: "The central finding overall is that sleep-disordered breathing is associated with a fifty percent increase in adverse neurobehavioral outcomes."

Those problems include hyperactivity, aggressiveness and problems relating to other children.

Ms. Bonuck says the more serious the breathing problems, the more serious the behavioral issues were likely to be. Other studies have linked sleep with children's behavior, but this study was extensive enough to reject other possible causes.

The study appears in the journal *Pediatrics*. An estimated one child in ten snores regularly. A smaller number suffer from other sleep-disordered breathing.

How well do you sleep? A popular belief is that sleep gets worse with age. But, in another new study, those who reported the fewest problems with the quality of their sleep were people in their eighties.

Researchers did a telephone survey of more than one hundred fifty thousand American adults. Michael Grandner at the University of Pennsylvania medical school says the original goal was to confirm that aging is connected with increased sleep problems.

The survey did find an increase during middle age, worse in women than men. But except for that, people reported that their sleep quality improved as they got older. At least they felt it did.

Mr. Grandner says, "Even if sleep among older Americans is actually worse than in younger adults, feelings about it still improve with age."

The findings appear in the journal *Sleep*. In the study, health problems and depression were linked with poor sleep. Also, women reported more sleep disturbances and tiredness than men.

But, based on the study, Mr. Grandner says older people who are not sick or depressed should be reporting better sleep. "If they're not, they need to talk to their doctor. They shouldn't just ignore it," he says. Nor should their doctor ignore it. He says health care providers generally dismiss sleep complaints from older adults as a normal part of aging.

And that's the VOA Special English Health Report. I'm Jim Tedder.

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