



A Common but Overlooked Problem in Adolescents: Poor Sleep Quality

Ergenlerde Sık Görülen Bir Sorun: Kalitesiz Uyku

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Dear Editor,

I read with great interest your article titled “The Associations between Sleep Problems, Parental Attitudes, and Behavioral Problems in Preschool Children” (1). This study highlights the importance of effectively managing sleep anxiety and duration in children, given their significant behavioral and emotional consequences. Building on these findings, I would like to draw attention to sleep problems in adolescents, another age group that is often overlooked.

Adequate sleep is essential for healthy growth and development during both childhood and adolescence. It significantly contributes to physical health, immune function, mental well-being, and academic performance (1). Adolescence is marked by intense neurodevelopmental changes, especially in the prefrontal cortex, which governs executive functions. Sleep disturbances during this critical period can impair planning, decision-making, and emotional regulation, potentially leading to attention deficits, memory issues, and emotional instability (1). Numerous studies have demonstrated strong associations between poor sleep habits in adolescents and a wide range of psychological, behavioral, and physical problems (2).

Research consistently shows that sleep disturbances are highly prevalent among adolescents. Approximately 10% meet the diagnostic criteria for insomnia, while over 33% report at least one symptom of sleep disturbance (2). These problems are closely linked with mood disorders such as anxiety and depression. Adolescents with sleep difficulties often exhibit

maladaptive emotional regulation strategies, including increased rumination and suppression, making them more vulnerable to these conditions (2). For instance, a large population-based study in Norway involving 10,220 adolescents aged 16–18 assessed multiple sleep parameters, alongside fatigue and daytime sleepiness. The study found that 65% had trouble falling asleep, and 18.5% met DSM-5 criteria for insomnia (3). Furthermore, insufficient sleep has been associated with risk-taking behaviors such as substance use and academic failure, underscoring the broad impact of sleep on adolescent well-being (4).

Poor sleep quality often hampers the management of other health-related behaviors in adolescents. Therefore, establishing a regular and restorative sleep routine should be a primary intervention. Once consistent sleep patterns are in place, addressing other issues becomes more feasible. Preventable sleep problems must be prioritized during adolescence, as many lifelong health habits are formed during this stage (5). Additionally, improving adolescent sleep behaviors may help prevent adult sleep disorders, which pose significant public health challenges.

Sleep disturbances are a modifiable risk factor crucial for improving adolescent health. Both sleep quality and regularity are vital in maintaining healthy circadian rhythms at physiological and behavioral levels (2). Therefore, healthcare providers, educators, and policymakers must collaborate to promote healthy sleep habits among adolescents. Strategies such as

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establishing regular sleep schedules, limiting screen time before bed, and raising awareness of sleep's importance can mitigate the adverse effects of sleep disturbances.

In conclusion, addressing sleep disorders in adolescence is not only about improving sleep quality; it is an essential step to safeguard cognitive and emotional development, ultimately enhancing overall quality of life.

Footnotes

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