

## Sleep Problems in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Developmental Delays: A Study That Raises Awareness

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Lewis First, MD, MS, Editor in Chief, Pediatrics

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We know that if an otherwise healthy child does not get enough sleep, they can have a variety of less-than-ideal behaviors during the day. Not getting enough sleep can also affect a child's ability to think and focus, as well as keep their body recharged and healthy. The impact of sleep-associated health problems can be worse for children with a neurodevelopmental disability like autism. To assess how common sleep problems are in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD),

Reynolds et al. ([10.1542/peds.2018-0492](#)) share with us the results of a large national multisite study involving parents who were divided into four categories—(1) those with a child with ASD; (2) those with a child with developmental delays and disorders (DD) with ASD characteristics; (3) those with DD without ASD characteristics; and (4) children from the general population (POP). Parents in each category answered the validated Children's Sleep Habits Questionnaire. The results showed that all groups demonstrated a variety of sleep problems-- almost 50% of those in the ASD groups and 25% in the non-ASD DD or POP groups. Given the prevalence of sleep problems in these children with developmental disabilities, are we asking about sleep in this population of children or better yet, trying to help families do something about their child's sleep issues?

Because we did not just want to lay out the problem, but help point you toward some solutions, we invited a commentary by Dr. Catherine Lord ([10.1542/peds.2018-2629](#)), who specializes in helping families of children with ASDs. Dr. Lord updates us on many different options for helping these children—some that can be done by an individual caregiver, others done in group therapy with children and their parents, and others that may be suggested and taught by you. What does come across in both the paper and commentary is the importance of asking about sleep in children with ASDs and DDs just as we should be doing during routine health maintenance visits of otherwise healthy children. Both the study and commentary have a lot to offer that can change how we view sleep problems in our patients—so consider

them both a wake-up call that will help you in turn help your patients better deal with their children's sleep issues.

- [Media Use and Sleep Among Boys With Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, or Typical Development](#)
- [Family-Driven Goals to Improve Care for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
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