

# How Sleep Affects Children with Cerebral Palsy: A Review



## Summary

Sleep disorders are well-known to affect daytime behaviours and significantly decrease the school performance of children. While these problems affect both typically developing children and children with neurodevelopmental disorders, recent studies have shown that children with cerebral palsy may be at higher risk. As a result, these children may also be at higher risk of obstructive sleep apnea (trouble breathing during sleep). Unfortunately, both sleep disorders and sleep apnea may go unnoticed by family physicians. In this review, authors explored different types of sleep problems impacting children with cerebral palsy and their families. They looked at specific risk factors and consequences, and examined current diagnosis and treatment plans. In order to gain the best understanding of these problems, the authors summarized 63 published articles relating to sleep, cerebral palsy, obstructive sleep apnea, and disorders of initiating and maintaining sleep. After a long review, they concluded that risk factors associated with the development of sleep problems in

children with cerebral palsy remain unknown. They also found that treatment of sleeping disorders remain unclear. Because of the adverse effects of sleep problems on child development and behaviour, and the implications felt by family members, this paper concluded that there is a great need for future research relating to diagnosis, management and clinical guidelines of sleep in children with cerebral palsy.

## What families should know

Parents may overestimate or underestimate their child's sleeping problems. Any signs that your child may have a sleeping disorder should be addressed by healthcare professionals to minimize potential developmental setbacks and behavioural issues.

## What practitioners should know

The cause of sleeping disorders in children with cerebral palsy has not been determined. Therefore, recognition, prevention, and treatment are important components that need to be addressed.

Children suspected to have sleeping problems should be referred to sleep clinics and/or sleep laboratories to undergo diagnosis and treatment.

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## Reference

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