[IMAGE]

Starting Our Children Down the Wrong Path

By Editorial Staff

Sleep plays a critical role in our physical and psychological health, but not enough people understand its importance – and even fewer take steps to maximize its benefits. Lost sleep, poor sleep, disrupted sleep, inadequate sleep; we're in the throes of a sleep pandemic that's only been made worse by COVID-19.

Adults aren't the only ones suffering the consequences of poor sleep; the younger population can experience academic and psychosocial issues, according to a study conducted by researchers at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. The researchers identified five general patterns of sleep among more than 5,000 children tracked at various points from birth through 10-11 years of age: persistent sleep problems through middle childhood (7.7 percent), limited infant / preschool sleep problems (9.0 percent), increased middle childhood sleep problems (17.0 percent), mild sleep problems over time (14.4 percent) and no sleep problems (51.9 percent).

Compared with children who experienced no sleep issues, children with persistent sleep issues through middle childhood experienced the most challenges with academic performance and psychosocial development (self-control and emotional / behavioral health). Even children categorized into one of the lower levels of sleep problems still experienced some degree of psychosocial impairment and reduced quality of life (as reported by caregivers), although not to the extent as children with persistent sleep issues.

Sleep matters, no matter your age, but developing healthy habits when we're young plants the seeds for a lifetime of health and wellness. To ensure your child gets a good night's sleep – particularly in the age of COVID-19, cellphones and social media, click here for tips from Stanford Children's Health and talk to your doctor.

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