

Poor Sleep May Complicate Young Diabetics' Blood Sugar Control

Source: Health Day News

Poor sleep may be undermining the efforts of children with type 1 diabetes when it comes to controlling their blood sugar, new research indicates.

In the study, researchers tracked sleep patterns among 50 kids with type 1 diabetes aged 10 to 16. Compared with similarly aged kids, the children with diabetes were found to be spending more time in a lighter stage of sleep.

In addition, experiencing this form of sleep deficit was linked to poorer performance in school as well as higher blood sugar levels, according to the report published in the January issue of the journal *Sleep*.

"Despite adhering to recommendations for good diabetic health, many youth with type 1 diabetes have difficulty maintaining control of their blood sugars," the study's principal investigator, Michelle Perfect, of the University of Arizona in Tucson, said in a news release from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

"We found that it could be due to abnormalities in sleep, such as daytime sleepiness, lighter sleep and sleep apnea. All of these make it more difficult to have good blood sugar control," Perfect added.

The study authors also found that about one-third of the children with type 1 diabetes had sleep apnea, irrespective of their weight. What's more, those who had sleep apnea also had much higher blood sugar levels. Sleep apnea is a disorder that causes frequent pauses in breathing during sleep, which leads to daytime sleepiness and fatigue.

The investigators noted that sleep apnea is a condition that has previously been associated with type 2 diabetes (which typically affects adults). The findings among these study participants may mean that it is also an issue among younger diabetes patients, they said in the news release.

In the meantime, Perfect pointed out that "sleep problems were associated with lower grades, poorer performance on state standardized tests, poor quality of life and abnormalities in daytime behavior. On the upside, sleep is a potentially modifiable health behavior, so these kids could be helped by a qualified professional to get a better night's sleep."

For more on diabetes, visit the U.S. National Diabetes Education Program.