

American Youngsters Yawning Through Class

Sleep deprivation common among fifth-graders, study finds

Many American fifth graders suffer jet lag-like symptoms and are too tired to learn because they're not getting enough sleep, new research concludes.

"Sleep affects the health and well-being of children and plays a key role in preventing disease and injury, stability of mood and the ability to learn. If this study is a good indication, youngsters are not getting enough quality sleep. Elementary school-aged children require an average of 10 to 11 hours of sleep each night, and most aren't getting it," study co-author Denise Amschler, professor of physiology and health science at Ball State University, said in a prepared statement.

As reported in the March issue of the Journal of School Health, the study of 199 fifth grade students found that most of them experience regular sleep loss and feel drowsy during the day at least two to four times a week. Almost 50 percent of the students said they have trouble waking up in the morning on school days.

Researchers found that 48 percent of the students argued with their parents at least twice a week about bedtimes, almost 32 percent said they stayed up late two to four times a week without their parents' permission, while more than 30 percent said they did the same thing five to seven nights a week.

Teachers have also noticed that many of their students aren't getting enough sleep. Teachers reported that more than a third of students regularly yawn during class, about one in every six kids complain about lack of sleep, and close to 9 percent of students seem hyperactive.

Amschler said computers and televisions in children's bedrooms may be an important factor in this lack of sleep and daytime fatigue.

"Because of the adverse effects of sleep deprivation on children's health and learning potential, healthy sleep environments should be created at home. Parents need to monitor their children's sleep behaviors, including

talking with their youngsters about their sleep attitude and experiences," she said.

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