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[Snoring in Kids Linked to Poor Academics](#)

A [recent observation](#) made in Australia could have significant meaning in the United States: **Children who snore and have a bad night's sleep could be lowering their IQ.**

The domino effect goes something like this:

- 1 A child has **trouble breathing** at night, which explains the snoring and sparks a bad night's sleep.
- 2 The labored breathing ultimately leads to a **lack of oxygen**.
- 3 A bad night's sleep translates to being **constantly tired** and unable to concentrate or learn new things easily.
- 4 This in turn exacerbates **developmental delays, poor memory and [behavioral problems](#)** in terms of attention, low frustration tolerance and poor impulse control.
- 5 Over time, prolonged poor sleep can **affect a child's IQ and education**.

I get asked about snoring children on a regular basis. Is it normal? Is it considered the same as an adult who snores?

Between 10 and 20 percent of normal children snore on a regular or intermittent basis, making the line between "normal" snoring and "abnormal" snoring seem a bit fuzzy. It's when [snoring](#) hampers restful sleep that it should be addressed, as in adults. But there are a few things unique to snoring children.

In 2002, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that all children be screened for snoring and that a diagnosis be conducted to determine if a child is experiencing normal (primary) snoring or obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) syndrome. About one to three percent of children not only snore, but also suffer from breathing problems during their sleep.

First, speak with your pediatrician to [get an accurate diagnosis](#). Though obstructive **sleep apnea** among adults is commonly discussed, it's true that children can suffer from the same condition. And they won't necessarily grow out of it.

Although most younger **children with OSA** are not overweight, which is typically associated with OSA, it's key to determine if weight is a contributing factor. Now that [childhood obesity](#) is growing at an alarming rate — with 1 out of 3 kids today considered overweight or obese —

it's no surprise to me that more kids are getting diagnosed with OSA. Other underlying medical conditions, especially [allergies](#) or [asthma](#), could also be to blame, in which case a nasal steroid spray could help improve nasal obstruction and OSA symptoms in children that also have allergies. If [GERD](#) (gastroenterological reflux disorder) is a factor, this condition could also be treated.

There could be other reasons, though, that are unique to children. A child could have been born with a small jaw or a small airway that makes it hard to breathe fully. There's also the possibility that the muscles, and the nerves controlling those muscles, are not well integrated during sleep and therefore do not open the airway enough.

And then there's the chance that a child has **enlarged tonsils and adenoids** that prevent normal breathing. This last possibility, in fact, is very common among youngsters. When the problems are significant enough, parents can choose to have their child's [tonsils and adenoids removed](#). According to the National Center for Health Statistics, more than 263,000 children in the U.S. have tonsillectomies each year and sleep apnea is a major reason.

Getting to the bottom of a [child's constant snoring](#) that affects his or her quality of life is critical during those early developmental years. But aside from addressing any medical conditions triggering the problem, it's also important to instill good [sleep habits](#) — or hygiene — in your children from as early an age as possible. If you teach your children how to prepare for sleep and to embrace it as an healthy component to life (and that they need their sleep to enjoy their days maximally), then they will naturally lower their risk for sleep disorders and grow into adults who experience restful, rejuvenating nights on a routine basis— maybe more so than their own parents!

No one likes a cranky, overtired child. Or an adult in that same state for that matter!

Here's another way to look at it: If your kids can increase their mood and happiness, and possibly even their IQ, through more restful sleep, wouldn't you want to encourage that?

Sweet Dreams,

Michael J. Breus, PhD

The Sleep Doctor™

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