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Natural history of snoring and related behaviour problems between the ages of 4 and 7 years.

[Ali NJ](#), [Pitson D](#), [Stradling JR](#).

Osler Chest Unit, Churchill Hospital, Headington, Oxford.

In 1989-90 a survey was carried out of the prevalence of snoring and related symptoms in 782 4 to 5 year old children. Two years later, in 1992, the same group of children was studied to gather information on the natural history of snoring and the related behaviour problems. A total of 507/782 (64.8%) completed questionnaires were received. Comparison of the responses with the 1989-90 survey showed that those who did not reply to the questionnaire were no different from the respondents in terms of the prevalence of snoring, daytime sleepiness, hyperactivity, and restless sleep. The overall prevalence of habitual snoring did not change between the two surveys (12.1% in 1989-90 v 11.4% in 1992), though more than half of the children who snored habitually in the original survey no longer did so. There was little change in the prevalence of hyperactivity (24.2% in 1989-90 v 20.7% in 1992) or restless sleep (both 39%) among the 507 who responded to the present survey. The prevalence of daytime sleepiness, however, did decrease substantially (20.7% in 1989-90 v 10.2% in 1992). There was moderate agreement between the individual questionnaire responses for the 1989-90 and 1992 surveys for snoring (weighted kappa 0.52), but poor agreement for the other symptoms (daytime sleepiness 0.37, hyperactivity 0.35, and restless sleep 0.38). Trend analysis showed that the increasing prevalence of sleepiness, hyperactivity, and restless sleep across the snoring categories was highly significant. Daytime sleepiness, hyperactivity, and restless sleep were all significantly more common in the habitual snorers than in those who never snored. Relative risks (95% confidence interval) were as follows: daytime sleepiness 6.13 (2.5 to 14.9), hyperactivity 2.78 (1.6 to 4.7), and restless sleep 2.3 (1.6 to 3.2). Though habitual snoring and the associated behaviour problems resolved spontaneously over two years in about half of the children with these symptoms, there is still the same overall percentage with these problems due to the emergence of new cases.

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