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Sleep-disordered breathing and behavior in three risk groups: preliminary findings from parental reports.

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Sleep-related breathing disorders may cause excessive daytime sleepiness, cognitive impairment, and behavior problems in children and adolescents. Adenotonsillar enlargement (AT) is known to be a significant risk factor for these disorders, which have also been reported in several patients with Down syndrome (DS). Children with attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity (ADD) show behavior problems that may be related to disturbed nocturnal sleep in some. To evaluate the relationships among these disorders and symptoms, parents of 29 school-aged children with AT, 70 with DS and 48 of their siblings (DS-SIB), and 21 with ADD completed a 20-item screening questionnaire covering nocturnal sleep symptoms and daytime behavior problems. Nocturnal symptoms of sleep-related breathing disorders--snoring, breathing pauses during sleep--were reported more commonly by parents of AT and DS children. However, parents of two of the ADD children reported significant signs of sleep-related breathing disorders. Daytime behavior problems were more common in ADD and AT than in the DS group. Bedwetting reports did not distinguish groups. Direct comparisons of DS and DS-SIB groups showed that more DS were mouth breathers, snored, stopped breathing at night, and were sleepy in the daytime. These findings underscore the importance of obtaining a history of nocturnal sleep from parents of children with AT and DS, as well as those with disrupted daytime behavior.

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