

# Sleep disturbances associated with behavior problems in children with autism

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Reports have suggested that sleep problems in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are associated with challenging daytime behaviors.

A new study on a large group of youths with ASD confirms these reports and will support the development of treatments for [sleep disturbances](#) as a way to improve behavior, according to researchers from Autism Speaks' Autism Treatment Network (ATN).

Results of the study, and three others conducted by the ATN, will be presented Sunday, May 2 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

An estimated one in 110 U.S. children has autism, a group of complex developmental brain disorders that affect behavior, social skills and communication.

The ATN, which includes 14 treatment and research centers in the United States and Canada, enrolls patients ages 2-18 years with a diagnosis of [autism](#), Asperger's syndrome or pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS).

Parents of children participating in the ATN completed the Children's Sleep Habits Questionnaire and the Child Behavior Checklist. An analysis of 1,056 children found an association between sleep problems and problematic daytime behaviors, especially [emotional problems](#) and

anxiety. Children who got less sleep had more emotional problems, and children who had parasomnias, including nightmares, night terrors and sleepwalking, had more [behavior problems](#) overall.

"This study contributes to our understanding of sleep issues and helps us to plan future work addressing more specific symptoms and treatments," said Daniel Coury, MD, medical director of the ATN and professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at The Ohio State University. "A better understanding of the relationship between sleep problems and daytime behavior could lead to more effective treatments for both."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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