



# ECHO

Environmental influences  
on Child Health Outcomes

A program supported by the NIH

## Study Summary

### ***Does stress experienced by caregivers affect the sleep health of school-age children and teenagers?***

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#### Who sponsored this study?

The Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program, Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health supported this research.

#### Why was this study needed?

Up to 50% of children and adolescents in the United States might experience sleep problems. Poor sleep can negatively affect brain development, learning, and physical and emotional well-being. Existing studies suggest there could be a link between poor sleep outcomes in children and teens and stress experienced by their caregivers, but these studies have primarily been limited to infants and young children. In this study, researchers used ECHO's diverse data to study this association in school-age children and teens.

#### What were the study results?

Children of caregivers who reported feeling stress from their life circumstances were more likely to experience sleep disturbances. This association was consistent across different groups of child and caregiver pairs studied, even after accounting for mental and physical health conditions.

**Footnote:** Results reported here are for a single study. Other or future studies may provide new information or different results. You should always consult with a qualified healthcare provider for diagnosis and for answers to your personal questions.

#### What was the study's impact?

This research suggests that children whose caregivers report increased perceived stress may be at higher risk for sleep issues. Screening for caregiver stress may help healthcare providers identify and plan interventions for children who may be at risk for sleep issues.

#### Who was involved?

The study included data from 2,641 children between ages 6 and 18 and their caregivers from 12 ECHO research sites. Most caregivers (78.6%) had at least some college education. About a third of the children (34.7%) had at least one mental health condition, and a quarter of the children (25%) had at least one physical health condition.

#### What happened during the study?

Researchers analyzed data provided by caregivers who completed the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) about their own stress as well as the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), a common parent-reported child behavior survey, about their children's emotional and behavioral well-being, including their sleep habits. The PSS is a widely used self-report survey that measures how much a person perceives their life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloading over the previous month. To evaluate how caregiver stress affected child sleep patterns, researchers looked at responses to questions from the CBCL that addressed children's experience with nightmares, insomnia, excessive sleep, troubled sleep, and ongoing tiredness.

### What happens next?

Future sleep interventions may consider a more global approach to improving child and adolescent sleep health. Continued research on the factors that influence family health and well-being may guide interventions that address the entire family and the dynamics of the family relationship.

### Where can I learn more?

Access the full journal article, titled "Caregiver Perceived Stress and Child Sleep Health: An Item-Level Individual Participant Data Meta-Analysis," in the [Journal of Child and Family Studies](#).

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