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Child Maltreatment and Sleep in Adolescence: Results from a Representative Community Sample

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Background:

Child maltreatment can have negative implications on current and future health and well-being. Healthy sleep patterns are an important indicator of health and are particularly important for adolescent growth and development. Previous research shows that child maltreatment is related to poor sleep outcomes in adults. To date, very few studies have examined the relationship between child maltreatment and adolescent sleep patterns using representative data.

Objective:

The objective of the current study was to examine the relationship between five different types of child maltreatment and four sleep outcomes among adolescents in Ontario, Canada.

Methods:

Data were from a subset of the Ontario Child Health Study 2014, a representative sample of adolescents aged 14 to 17 years in Ontario ($n=1,894$). Child maltreatment included experiences of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence (EIPV). Sleep outcomes included time it takes to fall asleep, waking during the night, and hours of sleep on weekdays and weekends.

Results:

Findings indicate that all types of child maltreatment were associated with increased odds of taking more than 10 minutes to fall asleep (adjusted odds ratio [AOR]: 1.20 - 1.63) and fewer hours slept on weekdays (adjusted beta [AB]: -0.45 to -0.23). All forms of child maltreatment, with the exception of physical neglect, were associated with waking more often during the night (AOR: 1.95- 4.51). Emotional abuse, physical neglect, and EIPV were associated with decreased hours of sleep on weekends (AB: -0.42, -0.14). All analyses were adjusted for child age, sex, household income and single parent status.

Conclusion:

Preventing child maltreatment may improve sleep outcomes among adolescents, thereby improving overall health and well-being.