

IN DEPTH

Could Your Sleep Issues Be Rubbing off on Your Kids?

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[September 11, 2017](#) ([September 11, 2017](#))

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to fall asleep at night when all you accomplish is tossing and turning for hours. About a third of adults in the United States – between [50 and 70 million](#) – suffer from insomnia. They may have difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep throughout the night, or wake up too early in the morning. Some experience short-term insomnia, which is brief and lasts for up to three months, while others have chronic insomnia, which occurs at least three times per week and lasts for at least three months.

Insomnia is not uncommon for parents. Moms, in particular, tend to develop sleep issues since their schedules are so different when they have a young child at home. Between middle-of-the-night feedings, crying babies, and simply worrying about everything from our child's health to getting the laundry done, it's no wonder that moms develop insomnia. According to a [National Sleep Foundation](#) poll, 74 percent of stay-at-home moms reported having some insomnia symptoms.

Unfortunately, insomnia can lead to health problems including high blood pressure, anxiety, or depression, according to the [American Academy of Sleep Medicine](#). It can also interfere with daily life due to the following symptoms: fatigue, inability to focus and concentrate, poor memory, mood change, low motivation or energy, and increased errors or accidents. A new study from the University of Basel reported in [Sleep Medicine](#) also shows how a mother's insomnia can impact her child's sleep patterns as well.

During this research, about 200 children, ages seven to 12, and their parents were studied. The children's sleep patterns were analyzed with in-home electroencephalography (EEG) equipment. This technology records electrical activity in the brain to show different sleep stages throughout the night. The parents reported their own insomnia symptoms and their children's sleep problems that they witnessed.

The data collected indicates that children whose mothers have insomnia symptoms fall asleep later, get less sleep, and spend less time in deep sleep. These sleep issues potentially impact the children's development and mental health. Interestingly enough, there was no link between the fathers' insomnia symptoms and children's sleep, so Dad, you're off the hook in this case.

What could be the reason for a mother's sleep habits impacting her child's? The researchers offer a few possible ideas for this link.

- In most cases, children spend more time with their mothers, and they learn sleep habits from the parent they are with most often.
- Stress in the household, such as family fights, could impact both mom's and the children's sleep patterns.
- They may share genes that predispose them to poor sleep.
- It's also possible that the moms suffering from insomnia are hyper-vigilant to sleep issues, so they recognize their children's sleep problems more easily. They could also be monitoring their children much more often than mothers who sleep soundly at night. Maybe it's because they can't fall asleep, so they keep checking on their kids!

If you and your children are struggling to get a good night's sleep, try some of these tips. If the problem persists, be sure to visit your doctor for an evaluation.

- Stick to a consistent bedtime routine.
- Set a regular wake-up time.
- Create a relaxing, comfortable sleeping environment, such as comfy pillows, stuffed animals, room darkening shades, and soothing music.
- Shut off all types of technology at least an hour before bedtime.
- Keep the room cool – [Babycenter.com](#) recommends setting the temperature at 65 to 70 degrees for young children.
- Do a quiet activity right before bedtime, such as yoga, coloring, reading, or journaling.



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