

Sleep Study for a Child



A sleep study is a way to measure what's going on during a child's sleep. It's also known as a polysomnogram. It's a painless test done overnight in a hospital or clinic. Another type of sleep study is the home sleep apnea test (HSAT). The HSAT is used less commonly in children, but may be ordered if your healthcare provider feels that it's appropriate. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine does **not** recommend using the HSAT to diagnose obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) in children.

Why sleep studies are done

A sleep study measures how well a child sleeps. It can be used to find out if your child has a sleep disorder, such as OSA. OSA is a common problem in children. But it often goes undiagnosed. This is partly because symptoms can be different than they are in adults. OSA happens when the airway is blocked during sleep. When this happens, the brain tells the body to wake up just enough to open the airway and allow breathing again. This can happen many times during the night, even though your child doesn't remember it. Other disorders can also be diagnosed during a sleep study. Some of these include sleep terrors, restless legs syndrome, and narcolepsy.

What happens during a sleep study?

Most sleep studies are done at a sleep clinic or a sleep lab. Your child will sleep overnight in a private room that is like a hotel or hospital room. In many cases, a parent or family member can stay overnight, too. In the morning, you and your child can go home.

A sleep study uses wires, sensors or electrodes (small sticky pads) attached to the body while your child sleeps. They're put on the body, face, and head. Wires are attached to the electrodes. These measure brain waves and other signals from your child's body during sleep. The wires lead to a computer that records information.

During your child's sleep study, the following will be recorded:

- Brain wave activity
- Eye movement
- Muscle movement
- Breathing
- Blood oxygen and possibly carbon dioxide levels
- Heart rhythm and rate
- Stages of sleep

If your child has breathing problems during the night, a healthcare provider may have your child try a special machine. It's called a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine. CPAP is a device that helps a child breathe better. Your child wears a mask. The machine then blows air gently into your child's mouth and lungs. It may be used during the second half of your child's sleep study or on another night.

Before your child's sleep study

Be prepared by following these suggestions:

- Bathe your child the day of the study.
- Don't put lotion or moisturizer on their skin.

- Don't bring any valuables to the hospital or clinic.
- Bring comfortable sleepwear, toys, books, and other items that are a normal part of your child's bedtime.
- Bring any medicine your child takes.
- Bring your own sleepwear and items you need for your own sleep.

After the sleep study

In the morning, the electrodes will be removed from your child's skin. The sleep study results will be sent to you or to your child's healthcare provider. Follow up with your child's healthcare provider to discuss the results. Results may take several days or weeks. Your child's healthcare provider will talk with you about any follow-up tests or care needed as a result of the study.

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