

## **Obstructive Sleep Apnoea. Is it relevant to paediatric dentistry?**

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Obstructive Sleep Apnoea is a sleep- disorder that results in partial or complete obstruction of the upper airways during sleep, disrupting ventilation and normal sleeping patterns.

Sleeping is essential to allow the body and mind to recover and process the events and interactions of the day. For children, sleep is particularly essential for learning and memory processing. Signs and symptoms of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea in children may manifest as snoring, headaches, behaviour issues, poor concentration, poor school performance, bed wetting and even bruxism.

The aim of this review is to assess whether Obstructive Sleep Apnoea is relevant for dentists providing dental care for children.

Methods: Database Searches of Pubmed, Lenus –The Irish Health Repository, and Cochrane Library were conducted to identify relevant papers, using keywords such as; Obstructive Sleep Apnoea, sleep disorders, paediatric, children, dentistry.

Summary and Conclusions: Internationally, the prevalence of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea in healthy children has been reported to be between 1-5%. In Ireland, this would translate to approximately 10-50,000 children affected by Obstructive Sleep Apnoea, according to the Central Statistics Office. In children with certain underlying medical conditions, such as Downs Syndrome, the percentage incidence increases considerably to between 25 and 70%. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential to avoid long term sequelae, such as impaired growth and development and in extreme cases; brain damage, seizures, coma and cardiac problems. Unfortunately, diagnosis is often delayed or misdiagnosed and in Ireland the proportion of children being referred for investigation is very low. Due to the very nature of dentistry, dentists are obvious candidates to aid in screening children who are at risk for Obstructive Sleep Apnoea.