



Lower College GPA And Evening Chronotype In High School Students Linked

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According to a research abstract at SLEEP 2009, the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies, students who consider themselves to be evening types (that is someone who feels more alert and does their best work later in the day) have poorer sleep hygiene scores than morning and intermediate types. Sleep hygiene is the group of behaviors linked to good sleep and alertness. Examples include having a regular bedtime routine, a regular wake time, and sleeping in a comfortable bed. The researchers found that this poor sleep hygiene was related to poorer academic performance and a decline in grade point average (GPA) during the transition from high school to college.

Results indicate that evening types had significantly lower first year college GPA (2.84) than morning and intermediate types (3.18). These evening-type students showed a greater decrease in their GPA during the transition from high school to college than their peers; their grades dropped by .98 GPA points, while others only dropped by .69 GPA points. These evening types also slept on average 41 minutes less than other students on school nights.

Lead author Jennifer Peszka, PhD, psychology department chair at Hendrix College in Conway, Ark., said that many students experience deterioration in sleep hygiene during their transition from high school to college.

"Although the results of the study aligned with our expectations, the size of the GPA difference between evening types and morning and intermediate types was surprising," said Peszka. "Further, the difference is at a critical point on the GPA scale with evening types scoring below a B average and morning and intermediate types scoring above a B average."

The study was based on data from 89 students (between 17 and 20 years old) preparing to begin their freshman year and 34 of those students as they completed their freshman year at a liberal arts college.

Authors of the study state educating high school and college students about the possible negative effects of poor sleep behaviors on academic performance may result in improvement in academic performance, especially in adolescents who are at risk due to poor sleep hygiene and evening-type status.

It is recommended that adolescents get nine hours of sleep per night, and school-aged children between 10-11 hours. More information about sleep hygiene is available from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) at: <http://www.sleepeducation.com/Hygiene.aspx>

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