

Do parents' sleep problems get passed on to their kids?

June 8 2016, by Tony Malkovic, Sciencenetwork Wa



Insomnia has been associated with depression, workplace accidents and absenteeism. Credit: iStock

The sleeping habits of more than 1,000 adult West Australians are to be assessed to see if their sleep disorders are capable of being passed on to their children.

The research will provide comprehensive data on the [sleep patterns](#) of

adults aged 45 to 75 years old and investigate the most common disorders such as insomnia, sleep apnoea and 'restless leg' syndrome.

The unique research is the latest phase of the ongoing Raine Study which started in 1989 in Perth and has been tracking the health and development of more than 2,000 children from birth to adulthood.

In the past few years, about 1,000 of the young adults in the study took part in a sleep assessment when aged about 22 years old.

Now it's their parents' turn.

"The purpose of doing the parents is to see if there's a genetic link and to establish the prevalence in that adult age range, because it's a huge issue," Raine Study manager Jenny Mountain says.

The researchers have invited parents to spend a night in one of several specially designed bedrooms at the UWA Centre for Sleep Science where their sleep will be monitored.

"Basically what we do is put a sensor on your head, with electronic leads that trace the brain waves while sleeping," Ms Mountain says.



A participant of the sleep study. Credit: UWA

"And there are also ones that also trace your eye movements, breathing, oxygen saturation, and leg movements.

"Every 15 minutes of their sleep will be analysed by a sleep scientist, because your brain patterns change as you go through the various stages of sleep."

Sleep disorders are common across Australia and cost industry, the health system and the wider community an estimated \$10 billion a year.

And they can have serious results: insomnia has been associated with depression, workplace accidents and absenteeism.

Meanwhile [sleep apnoea](#) has been implicated in vascular diseases and

[motor vehicle accidents](#).

Yet many people don't realise they have a sleeping problem.

"The majority of [sleep disorders](#) are undiagnosed," Ms Mountain says.

As well as having their sleep patterns monitored, the parents will also undergo several related tests looking at their weight, body measurements, scans of body composition and bone density and lung function.

The [sleep](#) assessments will be carried out over 2016-17 with the results available in coming years.

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