

# **Sleep and Psychological Wellbeing in Children with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder**

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## **SUMMARY of FINDINGS**

Sleep problems are common in children with neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It is believed that multiple biological, psychological, and environmental factors may be associated with an increased risk for sleep disturbance in these children. Children with ASD also have a wide range of co-morbid psychiatric and developmental disorders, including ADHD, anxiety, and depression and these may be associated with sleep problems. The present study examined the psychological correlates (ADHD, anxiety, and depression) of sleep problems in children with high functioning ASD (HFASD) as compared to typically developing (TD) children, using both children and caregivers as informants. Thirty-three children aged 8-12 years (HFASD, 18; TD, 15) and their primary caregivers completed a number of questionnaires that investigated the child's sleep and psychological wellbeing. The results indicated that both child and caregiver-reports of child sleep problems were significantly higher in children with HFASD, compared to TD controls. No significant differences were observed between the two groups on self-reported anxiety and depression but the HFASD group had significantly higher scores on caregiver-reports of affective, anxiety and ADHD problems. Furthermore, the results showed that for both groups combined, children who had clinically relevant sleep problems were significantly more likely to score in the clinical range on all caregiver-reported psychopathology variables. Finally, significant relationships were observed between specific types of sleeping difficulties and different dimensions of psychopathology for both groups of children.