

# More detailed information about in the news

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## 1 Kids who snore could experience learning disruption



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Image: Sleep researchers are investigating whether they can improve a child's ability to learn by stopping them from snoring. They are conducting sleep studies at homes, including 7-year-old Thomas Gray. Picture: Jay Town.

CHILDREN who snore may not be learning to their full potential because of the behavioural problems that accompany disrupted sleep.

Up to 15 per cent of children regularly snore - more than one million Australian kids - and they typically suffer behavioural, learning and memory problems regardless of whether it is more mild night noises or severe sleep apnoea disorders.

A home sleep study run by Monash Health's Melbourne's Children's Sleep Centre, is testing whether children with simple snoring - but are not severe enough to have their tonsils or adenoids removed - have the potential to learn, but this is disrupted due to tiredness.

Dr Sarah Biggs, research fellow at the Richie Centre and Monash University, said although many children outgrew snoring as their airways became larger, given its prevalence at the time of life children where starting formal learning at kindergartens and school, it was important they were given the chance to reach their learning potential.

"Sleep is intimately involved in memory formation," Dr Biggs said.

“What you learn during the day is consolidated at night. For someone with severe sleep apnoea they’ll wake up a lot, the consolidated can’t happen and their memories won’t be there.

“But my theory is the children who have primary snoring will be fine at learning, the problems is they’ll be so tired from their snoring their behaviour is interrupting their learning.”

Thomas Gray is one of the 75 children diagnosed with primary snoring whose learning will be tested before and after a home sleep study.

The seven-year-old’s mother Katie Gleisberg said although he always looked tired, with dark circles under his eyes, she did not twig this could be linked to learning outcomes.

“You would only notice it when it was time to sit down and do work with him,” Ms Gleisberg said. “He would shut down. It was instantaneous.

“As soon as he had to concentrate on something he didn’t understand, he would rub his eyes and get a glassy look on his face.”

Dr Biggs said by uncovering the mechanism of how sleep disruption affects learning, they could better target treatments such as routines to promote more restful sleep, and strategies to improve memory and concentration.

Researchers are still looking for children aged 5-10 years who do not snore, for the home study.