Discussing a Child’s Sleep Problems

Parents may not be aware that they can discuss their children’s sleep problems with you. As a child’s primary care provider, you can screen for sleep disorders and encourage healthy sleep habits the same way you promote a healthy diet, exercise and other good habits.

Sleep disorders can affect every aspect of a child’s physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. How can you screen for the myriad of sleep disorders during a busy office visit?

Studies show that asking a simple question – “Does your child have sleep problems?” – is not as likely to identify sleep disorders as using a pediatric screening tool, such as BEARS. The basic sleep issues to screen for are easy to remember with the BEARS acronym.

**Bedtime Problems**
Sample Question: Does your child have any problems falling asleep at bedtime?

**Excessive Daytime Sleepiness**
Sample Question: Is your child sleepy during the day?

**Awakening During the Night**
Sample Question: Does your child wake up a lot at night?

**Regularity & Duration of Sleep Problems**
Sample Question: Is your child's sleep schedule irregular, with inconsistent bedtimes and wake times from day to day?

**Snoring**
Sample Question: Does your child snore a lot or have trouble breathing at night?

If parents answer yes to any of these questions, further investigation is needed.

You can then decide how to proceed:
- Provide counseling and handouts about common bedtime/sleep problems.
- Schedule another visit with the time necessary for discussion and management.
- Schedule a polysomnogram (sleep study).
- Refer the child to a sleep specialist for evaluation and treatment.

Parkway SleepHealth Centers offers comprehensive pediatric sleep medicine care, including family suites that make overnight sleep studies more convenient and relaxing for children and parents, as well as at-home testing options. If you would like to speak with our physician directly, please call us at 919-462-8081.