

Preparing for Your Child's Sleep Study

A sleep study is a procedure that is done overnight in the Massachusetts General Hospital Sleep Lab. This study is the only way to diagnose obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Read this handout to learn what to expect for your child's sleep study.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A SLEEP STUDY?

- When you arrive at the MGH Sleep Lab, you will first meet with the technologist who will be doing your child's sleep study.
- The technologist will put sticky recording pads on your child's head, face, legs and chest. A soft elastic band is also placed across your child's chest and belly. These sensors tell the doctor how your child breathes during sleep. They also check for heart rhythms, muscle tone and leg movements.
- A pulse oximeter is placed on your child's toe or finger. This checks for oxygen levels.
- A nasal cannula and flow sensor will be placed in your child's nose. This measures air flow and carbon dioxide levels.
- The study usually ends in the morning around 6 am and you should be able to leave by 6:30 am. The sleep doctor will then check the results of the study and contact your pediatrician with the results.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?

One parent or legal guardian must be present for the entire sleep study. Parents sleep in the same room as their child. Be sure to bring comfortable clothes for yourself. No siblings are allowed in the Sleep Lab.

WILL I BE ALONE WITH MY CHILD?

No, the sleep technologist will be in the control room all night monitoring your child's sleep. During the night, the technician may come into your child's room to adjust the sensors or check your child's breathing.

HOW DO I PREPARE MY CHILD FOR THE SLEEP STUDY?

Do:

- Explain to your child using simple words what will happen. We recommend reading our Sleep Study Social Story to your child once a day for a week before your appointment.
- Make sure your child has clean, dry hair.
- Help your child feel comfortable by letting them pick out their favorite pajamas, bedtime stories, pillow, blanket or other items that help during bedtime at home.
- Make sure your child had supper before coming to the Sleep Lab.
- Bring any medicines your child needs.
- Bring any snacks for bedtime and morning for you and your child. Also bring formula, a bottle or "sippy cup" if your child needs this.
- Bring any diapers or baby wipes, if necessary.
- Bring a pair of socks for your child and an extra change of clothes in case of an accident.

Don't:

- Don't allow your child to take a nap in the afternoon before the sleep study.
- Don't allow drinks or foods that contain caffeine on the day of the study.
- Don't dress your child in a one-piece outfit.

WHAT IF MY CHILD GETS UPSET?

Sometimes sleep studies are harder on parents than kids. Nothing during the sleep study set-up or sleep study itself is harmful. There will be plenty of snuggle time after set up. Even if your child only sleeps for a few hours during the night, the data can be very helpful in diagnosing OSA.