

The nap gap: How stopping naps early links to language and anxiety in preschool children

Newton, A. (2025). The nap gap: How stopping naps early links to language and anxiety in preschool children. *CRDCN Research-Policy Snapshots*, 4(1). <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/30918>

Context

Most 2-year-old children nap, but very few 5-year-olds do. How is the timing of when children stop napping related to language and psychosocial outcomes? This study provides answers to this question in the largest longitudinal study of Canadian children to date (>4900 children). There is conflicting evidence in the literature on the influence of naps on children's development and learning. This study provides more clarity and can inform childcare napping policies.

Key finding(s) from the research

Children who stop napping at a younger age (i.e., between 2-3 years old) than peers who are still napping understand more words and have slightly lower anxiety scores, 2 years later.

Population(s) studied: Children 0-5-years-old living in Canada

Research dataset(s) used: National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (Cycles 3-7)

Policy implications for this research

This research supports a flexible approach to napping policies. That is, children who have naturally stopped napping each day need not be encouraged to nap during the day. This research does not suggest that children should be encouraged to quit napping younger than their development would dictate; rather, parents and childcare providers should carefully attend to their child's napping needs and apply a flexible approach to napping (i.e., create environments to support napping and alternative quiet, low stimulation activities for non-napping children). These policy implications are also supported by several other preschool napping studies.

Policy area(s) this research can inform: Children and youth; Education, training and learning

Read the full article

Newton, A. T., Tremblay, P. F., Batterink, L. J., & Reid, G. J. (2024). Early nap cessation in young children as a correlate of language and psychosocial outcomes: Evidence from a large Canadian sample. *Sleep Health*, 10(2), 190-197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleh.2023.11.010>