

## Novel Approach to Evaluation and Treatment of Pediatric Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is common in children but often goes unrecognized. If left untreated, sleep apnea may result in health problems as well as behavioral and academic problems. Johns Hopkins pediatric otolaryngologists have created novel protocols for diagnosing and treating this and other disorders.

“We use a multidisciplinary approach to treating children with suspected sleep disorders that includes a full, comprehensive evaluation using a group of specialists with experience in such sleep problems to obtain a focused diagnosis and treatment,” says pediatric otolaryngology director David Tunkel.

Most patients undergo specialized pediatric sleep studies performed at Johns Hopkins—studies that, many times, are not offered at other facilities. “The standards for pediatric sleep studies are very different from those for adults,” Tunkel explains. “It is vital that a child receives an evaluation at a facility that specializes in pediatric studies.”

If the child must have surgery, Hopkins pediatric otolaryngologists

offer two advanced methods of adenotonsillectomy—powered intracapsular and coblation—that reduce bleeding and postoperative pain compared with other methods.

The powered intracapsular tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy uses a precision microdebrider that removes nearly all of the tonsils and adenoids, leaving a minute amount of tissue intact to protect the throat muscles and decrease postoperative pain. This method also decreases recovery time from two weeks to less than four days.

Coblation uses radio waves that turn saline into a lukewarm stream of charged ions that carry enough energy to quickly dissolve the targeted tissue, resulting in minimal tissue damage to surrounding areas. Benefits include less postoperative pain and a faster recovery period with a return to eating in one to three days, as opposed to seven to 10 days.

In addition, for the 5 percent of pediatric patients who require a more extensive treatment regimen, including craniofacial surgery, experienced Johns Hopkins facial plastic and reconstructive surgeons are available.