

Teens who have TV in their bedroom are less likely to engage in healthy habits

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University of Minnesota School of Public Health researchers have found that older adolescents who have a bedroom television are less likely to engage in healthy activities such as exercising, eating fruits or vegetables, and enjoying family meals. They also consumed larger quantities of sweetened beverages and fast food, were categorized as heavy TV watchers, and read or studied less than teens without TVs in their bedrooms.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents remove television sets from their children’s bedrooms. Despite this recommendation, almost two-thirds of our sample had a bedroom TV, which appears to be a factor for less than optimal behavior,” said Daheia Barr-Anderson, Ph.D., M.S.P.H., first author of the study.

A study group of 781 socioeconomically and ethnically diverse teens participating in the School of Public Health Project Eating Among Teens (EAT) study reported on their television viewing habits, study habits, grades, diet, exercise habits, and family connectedness. Nearly two-thirds of the participants had a television in their bedroom or sleeping area, and those who did watched four to five more hours of television each week.

Girls with a TV in their bedrooms spent less time in vigorous activity each week than girls without TVs in their rooms (1.8 versus 2.5 hours). They also ate fewer vegetables (1.7 versus 2 servings per day), and had fewer family meals (2.9 versus 3.7 meals per week). Boys with TVs in

their rooms not only had lower fruit intake (1.7 versus 2.2) and fewer family meals (2.9 versus 3.6), they also had a lower grade point average compared with their counterparts with no TVs in the bedroom (2.6 versus 2.9).

Barr-Anderson suggests that the first step parents can take to help their teens decrease unhealthy behaviors is to keep, or remove, a TV from the bedroom of their teen. Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Ph.D., principal investigator of Project EAT notes, "Our findings suggest the importance of not having a television in a child's bedroom. When families upgrade their living room television, they may want to resist the temptation to put the older television set in their children's bedroom."

Source: University of Minnesota

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