

TV, computer screen time linked to high blood pressure in young children

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Sedentary behaviors such as TV viewing and “screen time” involving computers and video games are linked with elevated blood pressure in children regardless of whether they are overweight or obese, according to research published this month in *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

The findings suggest the trend in America of increased media exposure for children may be having a much more dire effect than previously thought, according to co-author Joe Eisenmann, a professor in Michigan State University’s Department of Kinesiology.

“The cardiovascular disease risk factors suggest that risks may be immediate and not just indicative of potential future problems,” Eisenmann said. “We’ve known from previous studies that sedentary behaviors are linked to obesity, and that obesity is linked to high blood pressure, but this is the first time that we’ve linked those behaviors directly to elevated blood pressure.”

Eisenmann, a former professor at Iowa State University, worked with ISU colleagues David Martinez-Gomez and Greg Welk to analyze data on 57 boys and 54 girls ages 3 to 8. Sedentary behavior was determined by an accelerometer worn over the right hip and by parental reports stating the average time the children spent watching TV, playing video games, painting, sitting or taking part in other activities with low levels of physical activity each day for seven days.

Time watching TV was defined as time spent watching TV, videotapes or DVDs. Computer use was defined as the time spent using a home computer or [video game](#). Researchers defined [screen time](#) as the total amount of time each child spent using a TV, video, computer or video game.

The children's height, weight, fat mass and blood pressure were measured.

Eisenmann and colleagues found that overall sedentary activity was not significantly related to higher blood pressure, but TV viewing and screen time were linked to elevated levels.

“It appears other factors, which occur during excessive screen time, should also be considered in the context of sedentary behavior and elevated [blood pressure](#) development in children,” Eisenmann said. “[TV viewing](#) often comes with unhealthy snacking behavior and also can lead to stress responses that disrupt sleep.”

To combat the problem, Eisenmann stresses parents and children need to adhere to limits set by the American Academy of Pediatrics of no more than two hours of TV watching per day. Also, that needs to be combined with at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

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Provided by Michigan State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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