

# When screen time becomes a pain

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The amount of time teenagers spend in front of TV screens and monitors has been associated with physical complaints. A large study of more than 30,000 Nordic teenagers published in the open access journal *BMC Public Health* has shown that TV viewing, computer use and computer gaming (screen time) were consistently associated with back pain and recurrent headaches.

Torbjørn Torsheim, from the University of Bergen, Norway, worked with an international team of researchers to study the association between 'screen time' and head- or back-ache. He said, "A rising prevalence of physical complaints such as [back pain](#), neck and shoulder pain, and headache has been reported for adolescent populations. Parallel to this, adolescents are spending an increasing amount of time on screen-based activities, such as TV, computer games, or other types of computer based entertainment".

The researchers found that there was little interaction between specific types of screen-based activity and particular physical complaints, with the exception of headache in girls, which seemed to be particularly associated with computer use and [TV viewing](#) but not gaming. Torsheim and his colleagues suggest this indicates that physical complaints are not related to the type of screen-based activity, but to the duration and ergonomic aspects of such activity. Speaking about the findings, Torsheim said, "The consistent but relatively weak magnitude of associations is in line with the interpretation that [screen time](#) is a contributing factor, but not a primary causal factor, in headache and backache in the general population of Nordic school-aged teenagers."

**More information:** Screen-based activities and physical complaints among adolescents from the Nordic countries, Torbjørn Torsheim, Lilly Eriksson, Christina W Schnohr, Fredrik Hansen, Thoroddur Bjarnason and Raili Välimaa, BMC Public Health (in press), [www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/](http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/)

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