

TV time: Why children watch multi-screens

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New research published in BioMed Central's open access journal, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, examines the relationship children have with electronic viewing devices and their habits of interacting with more than one at a time.

A sedentary lifestyle, linked to spending lots of time [watching TV](#) and playing computer games, is thought to lead to [obesity](#), lower mental well-being, and cause health problems in later life, including [diabetes](#). It is now possible to watch TV 'on demand' via the internet, play computer games on laptops, on hand-held devices or mobile phones, to keep in contact with friends using text, Facebook, Skype, and MSN, and to do all this concurrently. However previous studies have not examined if children take part in multi-screen viewing or children's reasons for doing so.

Questioning 10-11 year olds, researchers at the University of Bristol and Loughborough University found that the children enjoyed looking at more than one screen at a time. They used a second device to fill in breaks during their entertainment, often talking or texting their friends during adverts or while they were waiting for computer games to load. TV was also used to provide background entertainment while they were doing something else – especially if the program chosen by their family was 'boring'.

Dr Jago from the University of Bristol explained, "Health campaigns recommend reducing the amount of time children spend watching TV. However the children in this study often had access to at least five

different devices at any one time, and many of these devices were portable. This meant that children were able to move the equipment between their bedrooms and family rooms, depending on whether they wanted privacy or company. So simply removing the TV from a child's room may not be enough to address the health concerns and we need to work with families to develop strategies to limit the overall time spent multi-screen viewing wherever it occurs within the home."

Provided by BioMed Central

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