

Study examines associations between TV viewing, eating by school children

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Television viewing and unhealthy eating habits in U.S. adolescents appear to be linked in a national survey of students in the fifth to 10 th grades, according to a report published in the May issue of *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. The study is part of the Nutrition and the Health of Children and Adolescents theme issue.

Television viewing (TVV) by [young people](#) has been associated with unhealthy eating and food choices that may track into early adulthood. Young people in the U.S. fall short of recommendations for whole fruit, whole grains, legumes and dark green or orange vegetables, while exceeding recommendations for fat, sodium and added sugar that can increase the risk of obesity and chronic disease throughout a lifetime, the authors write in their study background.

Leah M. Lipsky, Ph.D., M.H.S., and Ronald J. Iannotti, Ph.D., of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, Md., examined the association of television viewing with eating behaviors in U.S. adolescents. They used data from the 2009-2010 Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Study, a survey of [adolescents](#) conducted every four years in the U.S. The survey included a nationally representative group of 12,642 students in the fifth through 10 th grades with a mean (average) age of 13.4 years.

"[Television viewing](#) time was associated with lower odds of consuming fruit or vegetables daily and higher odds of consuming candy and sugar-sweetened soda daily, skipping breakfast at least one day per week and

eating at a fast food restaurant at least one day per week in models adjusted for computer use, physical activity, age, sex, race/ethnicity and family affluence," the authors comment. "The relationship of TVV with this unhealthy combination of eating behaviors may contribute to the documented relationship of TVV with cardiometabolic risk factors."

According to the results, the odds of eating fruits and vegetables daily were higher for younger than older students, for girls compared with boys, and for white students and other groups compared with black and Hispanic youth. The odds of eating sweets daily were highest for older than younger youth, for girls compared to boys and for black youth compared with other racial/ethnic groups.

The results also indicate that the odds of drinking soda at least daily were highest for older versus younger youth, for boys versus girls and for black and Hispanic young people compared with other racial/ethnic groups. Skipping breakfast was more common for older than younger students, for girls compared with boys and for black, Hispanic and other youth compared with white students.

"Future research should elucidate the independent contributions of TVV, food advertising and TV snacking on dietary intake in this population," the authors conclude. "If these relationships are causal, efforts to reduce TVV or to modify the nutritional content of advertised foods may lead to substantial improvements in adolescents' dietary intake."

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