

Diabetes risk for elderly couch potatoes in Australia

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(Medical Xpress) -- Australians aged 60 and over spend more time watching TV than other adults and are at greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a new study from The University of Queensland has found.

The study of almost 2,000 elderly [Australians](#) found that over 60s watch TV for an average of nearly four hours a day, about an hour longer than younger adults.

The study, led by Dr Paul Gardiner from UQ's School of [Population Health](#), was one of the first to examine the effects of [sedentary behavior](#) and TV watching on [older men](#) and women.

“Up until now, most research about sitting and [watching TV](#) has been focused on children, while older adults have potentially the most to gain from changing their behaviour,” Dr Gardiner said.

Researchers found that, for each hour a person spends watching TV, their risk of developing metabolic syndrome increases.

Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of cardiovascular disease predictors linked to the onset of [type 2 diabetes](#).

Other lifestyle factors linked to metabolic syndrome include a lack of regular exercise, poor nutrition, high alcohol consumption and smoking.

Dr Gardiner said even light activity, such as folding washing while

watching TV, can reduce the risk of developing metabolic syndrome.

“Reducing sedentary behavior may be a feasible and practical way for older adults to improve their health and may be particularly important for those whose health or physical functioning limits their participation in moderate-intensity physical activity,” he said.

Previous studies had shown that sedentary behavior has a unique physiological effect on the body and that this was different from the effect of lack of exercise.

An intervention program developed and run by Dr Gardiner and involving face-to-face sessions with older people and feedback on their behavior, saw sitting time reduced by an average of 30 minutes per day.

“The next step is to examine whether reducing this sitting time translates into improvements in health and function,” he said.

Dr Gardiner will present his findings at the [World Congress of Active Ageing](#) in Glasgow in August.

Provided by University of Queensland

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