

Study shows lower verbal test score for toddlers who play non-educational games on touch screens

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-A recent study by pediatricians from the Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York examined infants 0-3 years old that used touch-screen devices to determine if their use was of any educational benefit to infants and toddlers. The study showed that children who played non-educational games using touch-screen devices had lower verbal scores upon testing.

The results also showed that although the majority of parents cited in the study believed their children received [educational benefits](#) by using smart phones, readers and tablets, there was no statistical difference in developmental scores in children who played educational games versus non-educational games.

"We have observed in our neonatal clinic that the number one "toy" parents are giving their toddlers are smart phones," said Ruth Milanaik, DO, chief investigator of the study and an attending developmental and behavioral physician at the Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York in New Hyde Park. "It was striking to see that parents were substituting books and general baby toys for smart phones. Many parents did not seem to bring any other distraction for their children except the touch screen devices."

Dr. Milanaik noted that the 2011 American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) policy predated recent technological advances such as [smart](#)

[phones](#) and tablets and discouraged the use of electronic media in children younger than age 2, citing potential adverse development risks and lack of evidence supporting educational benefits. The new 2013 AAP guideline cites positive and prosocial effects of media use but does not address children 0-3. The relationship between using touch-screen devices and cognitive development of this population had yet to be studied, according to Dr. Milanaik.

Of the 65 families surveyed, 63 (97 percent) owned a touch screen device. The average age of the child when starting to use a touch-screen device was about 11 months and average use was about 36 minutes daily. The most common forms of touch screen device usage was watching children's "educational shows" (30 percent), using educational applications (26 percent), pressing buttons on the screen aimlessly (28 percent), and playing non-educational games (14 percent). Sixty percent of parents reported "educational benefits" of their child using a touch screen device. The study showed there was no significant difference in testing scores between children who used touch-screen devices and children without the same exposure to [touch-screen](#) devices. However, results indicated that [children](#) who play non-[educational games](#) (ie. Angry Birds, Fruit Ninja, etc.) have a lower verbal score on developmental tests.

"Technology can never replace a parent's interaction with his or her child. Just talking to your child is the best way to encourage learning" Dr. Milanaik said.

More information: To view the abstract, "Relationship between Cognitive Development and Touchscreen Device Usage in Infants and Toddlers" go to: www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...14L1_1531.472&terms=

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