

# Can videogames improve health outcomes in children?

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The videogames for health (G4H) field is pursuing innovative, potentially highly effective methods for changing behaviors and affecting health outcomes in children, but more research, defined guidelines and targeted funding are needed to drive game design, determine optimal use, and minimize possible adverse effects, according to a white paper published in *Games for Health Journal: Research Development, and Clinical Applications*.

A team of leading games for health researchers representing the Institute of Digital Media and Child Development Working Group on Games for Health, with lead author Tom Baranowski, PhD, Editor-in-Chief of *Games for Health Journal*, from USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, and Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX, collaborated on the [white paper](#) entitled "[Games for Health for Children—Current Status and Needed Research](#)".

The authors review what is currently known about G4H, including [game](#) design and how they can target specific behaviors and health-related factors such as games intended to reduce anxiety before surgery, to promote physical activity, or to educate about [health](#). They also examine the implications of using G4H for [child development](#). The article emphasizes the need to overcome cost and technology barriers that could impede access to G4H, and proposes the need for guidelines for children, parents, educators, clinicians, policymakers, and technologists related to factors such as screen time and game development.

"The available evidence reveals that Games for Health are very promising to prevent and treat obesity, reduce stress, prevent smoking, and contribute to many positive [health outcomes](#) among children. This White Paper offers a road map for the activities that need to occur to achieve that potential," says Dr. Baranowski.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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