

Inactivity and screen time linked to teen depression

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Prolonged screen time and low physical activity is a "double burden" on public health. Credit: University of Queensland

Low levels of physical activity combined with high recreational screen time have been linked to poor mental health of adolescents in developing countries.

Researcher Dr Asad Khan, of UQ's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, found that teenagers in Bangladesh who did less than one hour of moderate exercise and had more than two hours of screen time per day were twice as likely to report [depressive symptoms](#) than those who

exercised for an hour a day.

"In many developing nations screen time among young people has increased considerably in the last few years due to socio-economic transition and the advancement of technology," Dr Khan said.

"There has also been an increase in the number of adolescents not meeting physical activity recommendations due to rapid urbanisation, issues of population density, increased traffic, and lack of open space.

"The double burden of prolonged screen time and low physical activity is a major public health concern for many developing countries, presenting a variety of health and psychosocial problems."

Dr Khan said the findings also had implications for developed nations.

"High screen time and low physical [activity](#) is a global phenomenon," he said.

"Technology is now a common part of teen lives, so it is important to balance [screen time](#) with an active lifestyle in order to minimise the risk of depressive symptoms and optimise wellbeing."

The study was published in the journal *Mental Health and Physical Activity*.

Dr Khan's research team will now develop a culturally appropriate intervention to help Bangladeshi adolescents reduce prolonged sedentariness and increase [physical activity](#).

More information: Asaduzzaman Khan et al. Is physical inactivity associated with depressive symptoms among adolescents with high screen time? Evidence from a developing country, *Mental Health and*

Physical Activity (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.mhpa.2017.03.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2017.03.001)

Provided by University of Queensland

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