

The more TV you watch, the more bodily pain you have over time: Study

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Data from 4,099 participants of the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (AusDiab) has revealed that an increase in daily TV-watching time is significantly associated with an increase in bodily pain

severity over time, according to a new study from the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute.

Bodily [pain](#) is common in aging adults and a common presentation in several [chronic diseases](#), including people living with type 2 diabetes.

"We found that increments in TV-viewing time over time predicted bodily pain severity," Professor David Dunstan, principal researcher and Head of the Baker-Deakin Department of Lifestyle and Diabetes said. "Even a one-hour increase in daily TV time was significantly associated with an increase in pain severity.

"And those findings were even more pronounced in those living with type 2 diabetes."

The study, published last week in the journal *BMC Public Health*, derived bodily pain score data using a validated self-report survey instrument for assessing health-related quality of life. The scores were measured on a 0–100 scale, whereby the lowest possible score of 0 indicated severe bodily pain and 100 indicated no bodily pain.

The study found that as average daily TV-viewing time increased, bodily pain worsened (score decreased). The mean bodily pain score for those aged 50 years at the start of the study, for example, was 76.9 and worsened by 0.3 units year-on-year. An increase of one hour in TV watching led to a worsening of bodily pain by 0.69 units (score further decreased), or the equivalent of more than two years of pain associated with natural aging.

The study also found that the bodily pain scores for people living with type 2 diabetes were even more pronounced. The type 2 diabetes cohort had higher TV-viewing time and more severe bodily pain than those without the condition. People without type 2 diabetes watched on

average 1.6 hours per day, compared to 2.2 hours for people with type 2 diabetes. When TV-watching time increased above 2.5 hours per day, the impact on bodily [pain severity](#) increased even more significantly.

Long uninterrupted periods of time spent sitting (sedentary behavior), especially watching TV, can adversely impact blood glucose control, insulin and other aspects of metabolism in people with type 2 diabetes. Such alterations in metabolism increase levels of inflammation, which can act to precipitate bodily pain.

These new findings highlight the benefits of reducing time spent in sedentary behaviors, for both the general population and those living with chronic disease.

"We know that increasing [physical activity](#) is a mainstay of the prevention and management of chronic health problems, but these new findings highlight the positive impact that reducing sedentary behaviors could have," Professor Dunstan said.

"Doing something as simple as reducing daily TV-watching time can have a profound effect on bodily pain trajectories that occur with aging, and also potentially be a non-pharmacologic intervention, or work hand-in-hand with other therapies, for chronic pain management."

Higher volumes of sedentary time have been shown to be associated with increased risk of all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, type 2 [diabetes](#), and some cancers. This study, however, is the first to report evidence of an increase in severity of bodily pain with advancing age in middle-aged and [older adults](#) with increasing hours per day spent watching television.

More information: Francis Q. S. Dzakpasu et al, Television-viewing time and bodily pain in Australian adults with and without type 2

diabetes: 12-year prospective relationships, *BMC Public Health* (2022).
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