

Screen time may not be tied to autism spectrum disorder

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Screen time for children may not be associated with development of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to a study published online Dec. 8 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Yaakov Ophir, Ph.D., from Ariel University in Israel, and colleagues conducted a [systematic review](#) and [meta-analysis](#) to examine the

association between [screen time](#) and ASD. ASD was defined as a yes/no ASD [clinical diagnosis](#) or ASD symptoms, while screen time was defined as hours of screen use per day or per week.

Based on 46 included studies (562,131 participants), the meta-analysis resulted in a positive summary effect size. When correcting for significant publication bias, there was a substantially decreased and nonsignificant effect size. The positive summary effect size was only significant in studies targeting general screen use in meta-regression. In studies of children, this effect size was most dominant.

When examining associations between social media and ASD, a negative summary effect size was seen.

"These findings suggest that excessive screen time may be associated with negative developmental outcomes; however, the observational nature and publication bias of the included studies render these findings inconclusive," the authors write. "These findings also do not rule out the complementary hypothesis that children with ASD may prioritize screen activities to avoid social challenges."

More information: Yaakov Ophir et al, Screen Time and Autism Spectrum Disorder, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.46775](#)

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