

Screen time tied to mental health problems in kindergarten children

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Screen time is associated with mental health problems in children aged 3–6 years, according to a study published online Dec. 4 in *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Haiwa Wang, from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and colleagues explored changes in screen exposure across different content types and their relationship with [mental health](#) in children ages 3–6 years. The analysis included data from 15,965 participants in the Shanghai Children's Health, Education and Lifestyle Evaluation-Preschool study (November 2016 to May 2019 when children were aged 3–4 years [wave

1], 4–5 years [wave 2], and 5–6 years [wave 3]).

The researchers found that as children developed from ages 3–6 years, the proportion of screen exposure to educational programs (no more than one hour per day: 45.0 to 26.8 percent) and entertainment programs (no more than one hour per day: 44.4 to 32.1 percent) decreased, while exposure to [social media](#) increased (no more than one hour per day: 1.5 to 27.1 percent).

A higher proportion of screen exposure to educational programs was associated with a lower risk for mental health problems (adjusted odds ratio, 0.73), but non-child-directed programs were associated with a higher risk for such problems (adjusted odds ratio, 2.82). Total screen time was consistently associated with [mental health problems](#), regardless of content.

"Limiting children's [screen time](#), prioritizing educational programs, and avoiding non-child-directed programs are recommended," the authors write.

More information: Haiwa Wang et al, Types of On-Screen Content and Mental Health in Kindergarten Children, *JAMA Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.5220](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.5220)

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