

Researchers identify a Dance Dance Revolution in kids' physical activity

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(Medical Xpress)—A study published in *Pediatrics* this morning by researchers at the University of Montreal offers positive news for Wii-loving teenagers and their parents: games such as Wii Sports and Dance Dance Revolution can bring them closer to recommended physical activity levels. The study is the first of its kind. "Teenage exergamers – people who play video games that require physical activity – are most likely females who are stressed about their weight.

On average, they play two 50 minute sessions per week," said study author Jennifer O'Loughlin of the university's Department of Social and Preventative Medicine. "As less than 15% of children and adolescents currently participate regularly in physical activity, we are pleased to report that exergaming can add to regular physical activity to attain

physical activity guidelines" Current guidelines recommend that youth engage in 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity most days of the week.

The study looked at the [family background](#) and videogame habits of 1,209 Montrealers aged between 14 and 19. Teenagers and their parents completed surveys that covered subjects such as [household income](#), drug use, body weight and education, enabling the researchers to ensure that their portrait of gamers was not influenced by a particular socio-economic profile. The questionnaire also covered what games were played, where, for how long, with whom, and with what intensity. [Wii Sports](#) (68% of exergamers), [Dance Dance Revolution](#) (40%), [Wii Fit Yoga](#) (34%), and [Boxing \(Punchout\)](#) (15%) were the most popular exergames played at home. [WiiSports](#) (26%) and [Dance Dance Revolution](#) (29%) were played most frequently at friends' homes. Less than 1% of exergamers reported exergaming at school.

The researchers underscored that although previous studies have shown that boys are more likely to play videogames in general than girls, girls are more likely to play exergames. "Girls might be uncomfortable exercising at school because they feel judged and these games could be providing an alternative," O'Loughlin said, noting that the games are particularly popular amongst youth of both genders who are concerned about their size. "On the other hand, there could be something about the kind of social interaction that exergaming provides that appeals to them."

Exergaming could provide an avenue for addressing the serious obesity epidemic and O'Loughlin hopes that the practice will increase. "Factors such as competitions, new consoles, multiplayer modes, and contact with other players via the Internet could improve participation," she said. "Additionally, the feasibility of exergaming in community centres or at school should be tested." Noting that other studies have shown that

boredom and other factors eventually may diminish the amount of exergame activity, O'Loughlin added that more research is needed to understand how to increase and support this kind of physical activity.

Provided by University of Montreal

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