

Frequent breaks from sedentary behavior makes kids healthier

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Canadian kids spend more than half their waking hours engaged in sedentary behaviour—watching television, playing video games or just sitting around. Studies involving adult populations suggest that breaks in sedentary time are associated with reduced global health risks. Today these findings have been replicated in a study involving children between the ages of 8 and 11 as published in *PLOS ONE*.

"We already know that sitting too much is bad for kids," says Travis Saunders, who earned his PhD at the University of Ottawa and is a researcher at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute. "But now, for the first time, we have evidence that simply getting up more frequently is associated with better health in this age group."

Researchers looked at risk factors for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease in [children](#) with a family history of obesity. They analyzed data taken from an existing QUALITY cohort study that included over 500 children living in Quebec. Using an accelerometer to gather data, the researchers studied all breaks in sedentary behaviour for these kids during a one week period.

Global health risk indicators were measured, including waist circumference, [body mass index](#), fasting insulin, fasting glucose, triglycerides, HDL-cholesterol and C-reactive proteins. Time spent at the computer and playing video games as well as television viewing during the 7-day period was self-reported.

"Increased screen time poses a persistent health risk for kids as a rule," continued Saunders. "But what's also interesting in this study is that video-gaming was associated with higher risk scores for boys whereas [television viewing](#) was linked to higher risk scores for girls."

This study suggests that frequent interruptions in

children's [sedentary time](#)—or the number of times children got up, rather than the duration of the break—can have a positive impact on their health.

Provided by Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute

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