

# Effect of Media Exposure on Child Health

## A collection of recently published news stories

(NOTE: hyperlinks in news stories below have been added by media educator Frank Baker

to assist the reader who may wish to explore or gain further information);

see also recommended [Media Effects Texts](#)

Center on Media and Child Health. Director Dr. Michael Rich was quoted in a recent New York Times interview as saying, "With media so ubiquitous, it is time to stop arguing over whether it is good or bad and accept media as part of children's environment, like the air they breathe, the water they drink or the food they eat." [Source](#)

## Television in kids' rooms: Really a bad idea, says study

Research has long established that for kids, more "screen time" is linked to higher rates of obesity. A [new study](#) (American Journal of Preventive Medicine) goes further. It finds not only that kids with a TV in their bedroom tend to watch more TV, which in itself should make them fatter, but also: Compared to television watched in, say, a family room, the screen time a kid logs in his or her bedroom is linked, hour-for-hour, to more belly fat, higher triglycerides and overall greater risk of developing heart disease and diabetes. Take two kids with roughly the same diet and the same level of physical activity: The study published Tuesday found that the one with a TV in his bedroom (and boys are more likely to have them than girls) will have more cardiometabolic risk factors than the one who has to watch TV in one of his home's common rooms. ([Source](#))

## **TV for Kids Filled With Social Bullying, Study Finds**

Children ages 2-11 view an alarming amount of television shows that contain forms of social bullying or social aggression. Physical aggression in television for children is greatly documented, but this is the first in-depth analysis on children's exposure to behaviors like cruel gossiping and manipulation of friendship. ([Source](#))

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## **'Collective traumas,' like war and natural disasters, viewed on television may have long-lasting mental and physical health effects: study**

Researchers at UC Irvine revealed that exposure to traumatic images on the news could lead to post-traumatic stress symptoms over time. Those watching four hours of day of TV news coverage after 9/11 and the start of the Iraq War were more likely to report physical health problems in the years following exposure. ([Source](#))

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## **Media Violence Consumption Increases the Relative Risk of Aggression, Analysis Shows**

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/08/120827130728.htm>

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## **TV ads may make unhappy tweens materialistic**

"....Dutch tweens who are happy with their lives are immune to the corrosive effects of materialism and watching hours of television, the study found. Only children who were both unhappy at the study's start and logged a lot of TV time were susceptible to the siren call of marketing. For these kids, frequently seeing advertising made them more materialistic, the researchers discovered." ([Source](#))

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## **Violent TV Shows Keep Young Kids Awake: Study**

There's more evidence that watching violent or age-inappropriate images on TV, in movies or on computers can significantly disrupt children's sleep. Kids between 3 and 5 years old who were exposed only to age-appropriate viewing materials in the hour before bed were 64 percent less likely to have any type of sleep disturbance, such as trouble falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep or nightmares, according to a new study.

Perhaps surprisingly, "violent" media might even include popular kids' fare such as *SpongeBob SquarePants*, said the study's lead author, Michelle Garrison.

"Making a relatively simple change in what kids are watching is a change worth the effort," said Garrison, a principal investigator at the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at Seattle Children's Research Institute. "Sometimes parents feel overwhelmed by the idea of getting rid of TV altogether, but switching shows can make a big difference."

The study will be published in the September issue of the journal *Pediatrics*, and was released online Aug. 6 ([Source](#))

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## **TV Habits Predict Kids' Waist Size and Sporting Ability**

Each hour of TV watched by a two- to four-year-old contributes to his or her waist circumference by the end of grade 4 and his or her ability to perform in sports, according to a world-first study undertaken by researchers at the University of Montreal and its affiliated Saint-Justine Mother and Child University Hospital.

The findings were published July 16 by lead author Dr.

Caroline Fitzpatrick and senior author Dr. Linda Pagani in BioMed Central's open access journal the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*. "We already knew that there is an association between preschool television exposure and the body fat of fourth grade children, but this is the first study to describe more precisely what that association represents," Pagani explained. "Parents were asked about their child's TV habits. Trained examiners took waist measurements and administered the standing long jump test to measure child muscular fitness. We found, for example that each weekly hour of TV at 29 months of age corresponds to a decrease of about a third of a centimeter in the distance a child is able to jump." ([Source](#))

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#### **Sexual Content in Movies May Predict Teen Sexual Behavior**

A recent study has found that exposure to sexual content in movies increases the chances of children adopting risky behavior later in life. ([Source](#))

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#### **Media violence a risk factor for bullying**

Knowing students' risks for aggression can help schools determine which students may be more likely to get in fights or bully others, U.S. researchers say.

The study, published in the *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, identified media violence exposure as one of six risk factors for predicting later aggression in 430 children ages 7-11, grades 3-5, from five Minnesota schools. ([Source](#))

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#### **Screen Time may weaken children's heart, lung function levels**

A study in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*

showed that children who spent more time in front of electronic screens had lower cardiorespiratory fitness levels than those with less screen time. The link between screen time and cardiorespiratory fitness levels was more prominent in children with mid-to-high cardiorespiratory fitness levels, researchers said. ([Source](#))

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### **Obese Children Navigate Minefield of Calories and Bad Ads**

A 2011 study found that kids with relatively high exposure to food ads on television consume more soft drinks and fast food than other kids do. ([Source](#))

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Watching TV can lower self-esteem of girls, black boys  
Indiana University researchers looked at the TV viewing patterns and self-esteem of 400 children, and found that watching more TV lowered the self-esteem of girls and black boys. However, they noted that TV had a positive effect on white boys' self-esteem. ([Source](#))

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### **Videogames can encourage good behavior in youth**

New studies by Iowa State University psychology researchers have found further evidence that youth who play prosocial video games – games in which characters help others in nonviolent ways – can increase helpful and decrease hurtful behavior. ([Source](#))

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### **Young gamer addicts linked to depression**

Children addicted to video games are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety and social phobias and may need professional help to recover, a visiting researcher says. Once their gaming is back to normal levels, their psychological problems shift, and their mood and school work improve, says

Douglas Gentile, a lead researcher on two major studies of video game addiction. ([Source](#))

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### **Study tracks Internet's influence and affect on body image**

Teenage girls are spending a concerning amount of time on the Internet, potentially leading to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction, research by Flinders University reveals. ([source](#))

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### **Adolescent alcohol consumption influenced heavily by the media**

New research funded by the National Institute of Health suggests that marketing and movies influence adolescents to start drinking and thereafter consume in excess. According to study authors, "Peer drinking, movie alcohol exposure, alcohol-branded merchandise, age and rebelliousness were associated with both alcohol onset and progression to binge drinking." ([source](#))

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### **Frequent Texting May Stunt Reading Abilities**

Researchers found that heavy texters were less able to understand new words – and less willing to accept them in contrast to people who read "traditional" printed language such as books, magazines and newspapers who are much more comfortable with accepting and understanding new words. ([Source](#))

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### **Study: Social media more addictive than cigarettes or alcohol**

Researchers found the individuals were more compulsive when it came to things such as checking email or social media accounts.

There were 10,558 responses to contacts made by researchers and a total of 7,827 reports about daily desires were recorded.

In analyzing the data compiled, researchers discovered, despite the fact cigarettes and alcohol are generally thought of as addictive, the strong desire for electronic communications appears to trump these two items. ([Source](#))

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### **Media multitasking can hurt social and emotional development in preteen girls**

The study, published in *Developmental Psychology*, found that heavy digital multitasking and more time spent in front of screens correlated with poor emotional and social health—including low social confidence, not feeling normal, having more friends whom parents perceive as poor influences and even sleeping less. Passively watching videos, online or on television, was also strongly associated with negative health measures. ([Source](#))

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### **Wearing earbuds can lead to accidents and loss of hearing**

The number of people injured while wearing earbuds has tripled since 2004, according to a recent study in “Injury Prevention” journal.

In 2010-11, 47 pedestrians were injured when they did not hear a car or train as a result of listening to music through earbuds. ([Source](#))

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### **Violent Video Games Alter Brain Function in Young Men**

Sustained changes in the region of the brain associated with cognitive function and emotional control were found in young adult men after one week of playing violent video games, according to study results presented by Indiana University School of Medicine researchers at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America. ([Source](#))

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### **Frequent gamers have brain differences, study finds**

Fourteen-year-olds who were frequent video gamers had more gray matter in the rewards center of the brain than peers who didn't play video games as much – suggesting that gaming may be correlated to changes in the brain much as addictions are. European scientists reported the discovery Tuesday in the journal *Translational Psychiatry*. ([Source](#))

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### **Teens' soda consumption tied to violent behavior, study finds**

"About 23 percent of those who drank one or no cans of soda a week carried a gun or knife, and 15 percent had perpetrated violence toward a partner. In comparison, among those who consumed 14 or more cans a week, 43 percent carried a gun or knife and 27 percent had been violent toward a partner, the researchers found. ([Source](#))

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### **New Girl Scouts Research Exposes the Impact of Reality TV on Girls**

The study ([Real to Me: Girls and Reality TV](#)) found that the vast majority of girls think reality shows "often pit girls against each other to make the shows more exciting" (86 percent). When comparing the propensity for relational aggression between viewers and non-viewers of reality TV, 78 percent vs. 54 percent state that "gossiping is a normal part of a relationship between girls." ([Source](#))

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### **No TV for Children Under 2, Doctors' Group Urges**

Watching television or videos is discouraged for babies younger than 2 because studies suggest it could harm their development, the AAP said Tuesday October 18.

"This updated policy statement provides further evidence that media – both foreground and background – have potentially negative effects and no known positive effects for children younger than 2 years," ([Source](#))

## **'Educational' TV for under-2s could stunt their development ([source](#))**

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### **BYU study: Hearing profanity may lead to more aggressive acts**

BYU researchers found that middle school students who watched TV and played video games with profanity were more likely to use profanity. And dropping swear words was in turn related to being physically violent and aggressive in how they treat others. The results were published October 17 in the American Academy of Pediatrics' peer-reviewed journal *Pediatrics*.

([Source](#))

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### **Kids' Cognition May be Harmed by Fired Up Cartoons**

A few minutes of watching "SpongeBob SquarePants" appeared to have negative effects on executive function in 4-year-olds, researchers reported ([Source](#))

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### **Sexy songs have detrimental effect on kids**

The new study has found that teens tend to overestimate the sexual activity of their peers and one source of this misperception is the entertainment media.

For girls in particular, sexual references in songs can lead them to think that their value to society is to provide sexual pleasure for others, leading to poor body image, depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse, the report said. The study has been published online in Springer's journal *Sexuality and Culture* . ([Source](#))

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### **Social Media Makes Kids More Likely To Drink, Smoke, Do Drugs, Study Says**

Of the roughly 2,000 teens surveyed, 70 percent said they spend time on a social media site during the day. Kids in that group are five times more likely to buy tobacco, three times more likely to use alcohol and two times more likely to use marijuana. Parents are unaware of the correlation, according to the study from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Nine out of 10 surveyed said they don't think there's a link. "We're not saying (social media) causes it," Joseph Califano, the center's chairman, told the Chicago Tribune. "But we are saying that this is a characteristic that should signal to (parents) that, well, you ought to be watching." The Tribune also points out that these studies are relatively new.

(Read the whole study [here](#).) ([Source](#))

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### **Texting, Social Media Affecting Teens Sleeping Patterns**

The study found teens send an average of 35 to 40 texts before going to bed. When compounded with biological effects – (Mark Eric) Dyken (University of Iowa professor of neurology and director of the Sleep Disorders Center) says teens are wired to stay up and sleep in later – and the environmental effects, such as overwhelming schedules stacked with school work and extracurricular activities, the window for sleep shrinks considerably. ([Source](#))

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### **Kids who use Facebook do worse in school**

[Research has found](#) that students in middle school, high school and college who checked Facebook at least once during a 15-minute study period got lower grades.

([Source](#))

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### **Minority Youth Media Consumption May Be Hampering Academic**

## Achievement

According to a Northwestern University study of youth media consumption ([“Children, Media and Race: Media Use Among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American Children”](#))

those between ages 8 and 18 use cellphones, television, computers and other electronic devices to consume an average of 13 hours of media content daily. That's 4-1/2 hours more than their white counterparts.

The study has renewed debate about whether minority youths spend too much time on media consumption and not enough on reading and studying. While some people insist that the disparity in media consumption contributes to the education gap between minority and white youths, others cite it as a positive that can aid a child's educational growth.

“I think that the results of this study coupled with the other factors that we know influence student performance,” says Sharon Lewis, research director for the Council of the Great City Schools, an advocate for urban public schools and students. “When you combine all of this together, it’s another indication that we need to take extra steps to reach [minority] youth.

([Source](#))

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Popular TV shows teach children fame is most important value, UCLA psychologists report

Fame is the No. 1 value emphasized by television shows popular with 9- to 11-year-olds, a dramatic change over the past 10 years, UCLA psychologists report in a new study.

“The rise of fame in preteen television may be one influence in the documented rise of narcissism in our culture,” said the study’s senior author, Patricia M. Greenfield, a UCLA distinguished professor of psychology and director of the Children’s Digital Media Center @ Los Angeles. “Popular television shows are part of the environment that causes the increased narcissism, but they also reflect the culture. They

both reflect it and serve as a powerful socialization force for the next generation." ([Source](#))

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### **Screen Time Driving Youth Obesity Epidemic**

Too much time parked in front of the television or computer screen is driving the epidemic of childhood obesity in the U.S., according to a new policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

And it's not just that many teens are couch potatoes, the academy argues in the July issue of *Pediatrics*: TV advertising drives sales of junk food, children and teens tend to snack while watching TV or online, and late-night use may interfere with sleep. ([Source](#))

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### **Content, Timing of TV Can Take Toll on Kids' Sleep**

Sleep problems common to the toddler set are made worse both by violent media content and greater evening use of televisions, computers or video games, a new study suggests. Reviewing parent surveys and media diaries from 617 preschoolers, Seattle researchers found that each additional hour of evening media use was linked to a significant jump in sleep problems, as was viewing of violent content at any time during the day. On average, the kids consumed nearly 73 minutes of screen time daily, with 14 minutes occurring after 7 p.m. Children with TVs in their bedrooms logged more screen time and were more likely to have trouble sleeping. ([Source](#))

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### **Prolonged TV Watching Raises Diabetes Risk**

The message is simple. Cutting back on TV watching can significantly reduce risk of type-2 diabetes, heart disease and premature mortality," said lead researcher Professor Frank Hu, of the Harvard School of Public Health. ([Source](#))

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Too Much Work, Food, Media May Be Hurting Health

Cheap fast food has led to Americans eating an average of 1,000 more calories a day than they need, this UCLA researcher said. Constant media exposure creates stress while also numbing people to normal human interaction. And to pay for it all, people are working longer hours and enduring longer commutes. ([Source](#))

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## **Violent Videogames Reduce Brain Response to Violence; Increase Aggressive Behavior**

Scientists have known for years that playing violent video games causes players to become more aggressive. The findings of a new University of Missouri (MU) study provide one explanation for why this occurs: the brains of violent video game players become less responsive to violence, and this diminished brain response predicts an increase in aggression.

"Many researchers have believed that becoming desensitized to violence leads to increased human aggression. Until our study, however, this causal association had never been demonstrated experimentally," said Bruce Bartholow, associate professor of psychology in the MU College of Arts and Science. ([Source](#))

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## **New study finds that violence doesn't add to children's enjoyment of TV shows**

Despite growing concern about the effects of media violence on children, violent television shows and movies continue to be produced and marketed to them. An Indiana University research study concludes that violence doesn't add anything to their enjoyment of such programs and their characters.

In a research study published in the journal *Media Psychology*, Andrew J. Weaver, an assistant professor of telecommunications in IU's College of Arts and Sciences, and colleagues tested a common view presented by media producers that children like to watch violent programming. ([Source](#))

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## **Television ‘breakups’ cause some viewers distress: study**

A new study examined how college-aged television viewers reacted when their favorite shows went off the air or were replaced with reruns as a result of the television writers’ strike of 2007-08.

The results revealed the important role television plays in the lives of some viewers – particularly those who use television for companionship and those who feel they have a strong “relationship” with their favorite TV characters. But for those who think that less time spent with the media may be a good thing for some people, the results may be disappointing. TV viewers basically replaced the time they normally spent watching their favorite shows with other media activities, such as watching TV reruns and using the internet, rather than spending more time with friends or exercising, according to the study.

([Source](#))

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## **Do video games make kids eat more?**

An hour spent playing video games may make teenage boys eat more over the rest of the day, a small study suggests. ([Source](#))

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## **Study Shows Multitasking’s Toll on Memory**

A growing body of research shows that juggling many tasks, as so many people do in this technological era, can [divide attention](#) and hurt learning and performance. Does it also hinder short-term memory?

That’s the implication of a study being published on Monday in [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), a respected journal. The research shows that multitasking takes a significantly greater toll on the working memory of older

people. Researchers said the key finding of the new study is that people between the ages of 60 and 80 have significantly more trouble remembering tasks after experiencing a brief interruption than do people in their 20s and 30s. ([Source](#))

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### **Could Pop Music Be Linked to Depression?**

Preliminary study found those who listened to lots of tunes had raised risk ([Source](#))

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### **Lengthy Exposure to Violent Video Games May Harm Children's Ability to Feel for Others, Study Finds**

Children's exposure to violent video games over time can impact their ability to develop empathy and sympathy for others, according to a new study written by Simmons College Communications Professor Edward T. Vieira, Jr., Ph.D. and published in the 2011 spring/summer edition of the *Journal of Children and Media*. The study is the first of its kind to examine how violent video games impact the development of moral reasoning among children ages 7-15, based on such variables as age, gender, perspective-taking, and the ability to sympathize. ([Source](#))

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### **Is The NFL Bad For Women's Health?**

a new scientifically rigorous [study](#) conducted by two economists offers compelling evidence that there is a significant link between the outcomes of professional football games and family violence (not the Super Bowl specifically), though only with certain game outcomes. ([Source](#))

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### **New study examines impact of new media on eating habits**

A new study by Rochester Institute of Technology is one of the first to

analyze how new-media technology, including the Internet and smartphones, are changing college students' eating habits and their relationship to food. Findings indicate that individuals are more likely to have meals while sitting at the computer than at the kitchen table, and that they use social media as the main avenue to obtain recipe and nutritional information. ([source](#))

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### **Doctors warn about Facebook use and teen depression**

Add "Facebook depression" to potential harms linked with social media, an influential doctors' group warns, referring to a condition it says may affect troubled teens who obsess over the online site. Researchers disagree on whether it's simply an extension of depression some kids feel in other circumstances, or a distinct condition linked with using the online site. ([Source](#)) ([A counter view](#) on this study)

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### **Models' Photos May Spur Mixed Messages About Body Image**

Even though it may make them feel flawed, people will look at images of male and female models if they believe they can achieve the same look, says a new study.

The Ohio State University researchers noted that previous studies have found that people who are unhappy with their physical shape feel even more dissatisfied when they see photos of people with "ideal" bodies. "So you have to wonder: Why do we still buy those magazines and watch those television programs when they should just make us more dissatisfied?" Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick, an associate professor of communication, said in a university news release. The current study examined how long 169 young adults looked at pictures of models in an online magazine. Those who were unhappy with their appearance spent less time looking at the photos, unless the images were surrounded by articles that suggested the reader could do things to help them look like the models. ([Source](#))

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## **MTV's reality shows glamorize aspects of teenage pregnancies (NOTE: this is an op-ed; not a study)**

there is a group of young mothers who is not ashamed to share their lives openly with the entire country: the stars of MTV shows 16 and Pregnant and its spin-off reality series, Teen Mom. The publicity and attention that these girls generate from the media essentially glamorizes teenage pregnancy

**[\(Source\)](#)**

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## **Study: Cartoon Characters Influence How Kids Like Food**

Dora. Nemo. SpongeBob. Kids know those names, and parents have been bombarded with those faces at the grocery store. Why? Because advertisers know they work. "Children, when they see characters in a show or in a movie, they really form a relationship of sorts with that character, and then when you use them to endorse a product, you're really tapping into that relationship," said Dr. David Bickham, instructor of pediatrics at the Center of Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital Boston. A new study confirmed how influential that can be when it gave 80 6-year-olds a cereal called Healthy Bits, except some boxes had characters from the Disney movie "Happy Feet" on it. The others did not. "That likability translates, then, into actually perceiving of the food differently," said Bickham. In the study, kids ate the same cereal, but when they ate it out of the box with the cartoon characters on the front, they thought their cereal actually tasted better. ([Source](#))

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## **Media exposure prompts risky behavior**

Exposure to activities like street racing, binge drinking and unprotected sex prompts risk-taking behavior and attitude – thanks to the media.

The connection between risk-taking and risk-glorifying media, such as video games, movies, ads, TV and music, was found across differing research methods, media formats and various forms of risky behaviors. "Risk-glorifying media has potentially grave consequences...substance abuse, reckless driving, gambling and risky sexual behavior," says Peter Fischer, psychology professor, University of Regensburg, Germany, reports Psychological Bulletin. ([Source](#))

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## **ISU study finds effects of TV ad violence on kids**

The Super Bowl annually produces the year's largest TV audience, making it a prime event for advertisers to debut their flashy, new commercials. But ads with violent content aired during a sporting event that also contains violence may amplify aggressive thoughts in kids, the authors of a new Iowa State University study say. ([Source](#))

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## **Study suggests video games can affect depression and anxiety in kids**

The study, which was based on a two-year survey of 3,034 children in Singapore, found that 9 percent of players were addicted, as defined by how much their playing interfered with their grades, emotions and relationships. The researchers weren't entirely surprised by that result, because of similar studies in the United States and other countries. What shocked them was how the reduction of troublesome gaming habits corresponded with fewer depressive symptoms. ([Source](#))

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**Being exposed to the media creates an unnecessarily scary world for children**

According to research from Nottingham Trent University, children have an inflated perception of risk and lack confidence in playing independently of adults. Cyndy Hawkins, senior lecturer in the university's School of Education, carried out a research project at a primary school to discover where the children played and what they were afraid of. ([Source](#))

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## **Giving Up Media Causes Withdrawl Symptoms**

Scientists at the International Center for Media & the Public Agenda (ICMPA) asked students at 12 universities around the world to abstain from using all media for 24 hours. They were then asked to describe their experience, reporting their

successes and admitting to any failures. "Texting and IM-ing my friends gives me a constant feeling of comfort," wrote one student. "When I did not have those two luxuries, I felt quite alone and secluded from my life. Although I go to a school with thousands of students, the fact that I was not able to communicate with anyone via technology was almost unbearable." The study authors found that the subjects found their televisions the easiest gadget to give up, with cellphones hardest of all. Many said the lack of a phone played havoc with their sense of time, and most owners said they could barely run their lives without one. Many participants described withdrawal symptoms similar to those of coming off drugs. "We were not just seeing psychological symptoms, but also physical symptoms," Dr Roman Gerodimos of the University of Portsmouth – who led the UK section of the international study- told the [Daily Telegraph](#). ([Source](#))

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### **Researchers Study Effects of Videogames on the Brain**

Scientists at the University of California at San Francisco are using high-tech MRI to uncover how the brain reacts to stimulating experiences, such as playing a videogame. As the author of this report negotiated the twists and turns of a racing game, the researchers gleaned data showing how blood flow in the brain is altered by the decision-making processes involved in playing such games. ([Source](#))

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### **Kids Who Watch R Movies at Risk for Smoking**

Children whose parents restrict viewing of R-rated movies are less likely to start smoking cigarettes and less likely to be inclined toward

sensation seeking, a new study shows. The researchers say their findings, from a study of 6,522 youths aged 10-14, suggest that parents

can guide risky behaviors to a significant degree by strictly limiting the R-rated movies they allow their children to watch.

The study, published online, will appear in the January 2011 print edition of *Pediatrics*. ([Source](#))

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## **Sex, drugs more common in hyper-texting teens**

Teens who text 120 times a day or more – and there seems to be a lot of them – are more likely to have had sex or used alcohol and drugs than kids who don't send as many messages, according to provocative new research. The study's authors aren't suggesting that "hyper-texting" leads to sex, drinking or drugs, but say it's startling to see an apparent link between excessive messaging and that kind of risky behavior. ([Source](#))

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## **Texting after bedtime affects attention, mood**

A preliminary study found adolescents who used electronic media at bedtime were more likely to have attention, mood and learning problems during the day. The study of 40 children, with an average age of 14.5, showed they sent an average of 34 text or e-mail messages per night, often after lights out, and some were awakened from sleep when they were texted or called by a friend. ([Source](#))

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## **AAP's New Policy Statement on Media Education**

Pediatricians' group calls for more funding for media education, reaffirms position of no screen time under two, asks pediatricians to ask two media-related questions at every wellness visit. ([Source](#): note: document cites many studies on media's impact on child/youth health)

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## **Preschoolers Getting Too Much Screen Time: Study**

Two-thirds of preschoolers in the United States are exposed to more than the maximum two hours per day of screen time from television, computers, video games and DVDs recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, a new study has found.



Researchers from Seattle Children's Research Institute and the University of Washington looked at the daily screen time of nearly 9,000 preschool-age children included in the national Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort, an observational study of more than 10,000 children born in 2001. ([Source](#))

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### **Screen Time May Consume Nearly 1/3 of Day for U.S. Kids**

Children and teens in the United States spend an average of seven hours a day using television, computers, phones and other electronic devices for entertainment, compared to an average of three hours a day watching TV in 1999, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). ([Source](#))

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### **Too much TV psychologically harms children: study**

The study, conducted by researchers from the University of Bristol, found that youngsters who spend hours each day in front of the TV or games console have more psychological difficulties like problems relating to peers, emotional issues, hyperactivity or conduct challenges, than those who don't. ([Source](#))

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### **AAP: 'The media have become one of the leading sex educators in the U.S.'**

In a policy statement released August 29th, the American Academy of Pediatrics weighs in on [Sexuality, Contraception, and the Media](#), calls for a national task force on children, adolescents, and the media, and advocates for comprehensive sex education, noting that "*It is unwise to promote 'abstinence-only' sex education when it has been shown to be ineffective and when the media have become such an important source of information about 'nonabstinence.'*" ([Source](#))

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## **Early Teen Sex, Media Not Linked**

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 20 (UPI) — A Philadelphia psychologist is challenging previous research that linked exposure to sex in the media and the early onset of sexual activity among teens. ([Source](#)) The research was conducted by Temple University psychologist Laurence Steinberg and published in the peer reviewed journal *Developmental Psychology*. ([Source](#)) [Study PR](#)

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## **Addictive Internet Use Tied to Depression in Teens**

Teens who spend far too much time on the Internet run the risk of developing depression, a new Australian study suggests.  
([Source](#))

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## **Too much screen time for children means poorer health**

The average American child spends four to five hours a day in front of a screen; that's roughly one-third of their waking time either in front of a TV or a computer, and all that screen time could be adding up to poor health. ([Source](#))

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## **Study: Playing Video Games Might Reduce Attention in Children**

Video games, like rock and hip hop before them, are sometimes blamed for all the evils that befell the youngsters of the planet but rarely is serious science employed to really study the effects that video games have upon players.

Now a study that was published on the Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that those children who are playing a lot of video games might actually be actively hurting their attention spans. ([Source](#))

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## **Retail Advertising Increases Smoking**

Teens who visit stores with cigarette advertising at least twice a week

are significantly more likely to start smoking, according to the study, "A Longitudinal Study of Exposure to Retail Cigarette Advertising and Smoking Initiation," published in the August print issue of Pediatrics (published online July 19). ([Source](#))

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### **Psychologist Links Reality TV With Teen Cosmetic Surgery**

Teenage years have long been linked with a heightened concern with appearance. Some reality TV shows take full advantage and tout happiness as just a nip/tuck away. A Rutgers–Camden psychologist has found that teens fond of these kinds of programs are more likely to join the millions who go under the knife each year. For bodies – and minds – still in development, these drastic decisions could have implications way after prom. ([Source](#))

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TV ads influence dietary habits of kids

Using television rating data from Nielsen Media Research for 2003, 2005 and 2007, researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago analyzed trends in exposure to food advertising by age and race for children and adolescents, and came up with some interesting findings. Whereas in 2003, cereal was the most frequently seen food product in kids' food advertisements, by 2007 fast food ads were the most frequently seen ads for children of all ages. ([Source](#)) These findings will appear in the September print issue of Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine.

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### **Cyberbullying Linked to Teen Health Problems**

A research team out of Finland's Turku University, whose work appears in the July issue of Archives of General Psychiatry, surveyed 2,215 teens ages 13 to 16. The teens were asked about their health, substance use, bullying experiences and psychosomatic symptoms.

Teens who'd been victims of cyberbullying suffered from emotional distress, concentration problems, headaches and abdominal pain, and had difficulty sleeping. Cyberbullies indicated several of the same symptoms, as well as behavioral problems, hyperactivity and frequent substance abuse. ([Source](#); [Abstract](#))

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### **Excess TV, computer video gaming linked to poor attention in kids: study**

Children who spend many hours a day glued to the TV or playing computer video games may be harming their ability to concentrate and focus on tasks in school, researchers suggest. A study by psychologists at Iowa State University found that kids who exceeded the recommended two hours per day of screen time were 1 1/2 to two times more likely to have attention problems in the classroom.

([Source](#); [Press release](#); [Study Abstract](#))

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### **Study: Cartoon Characters Attract Kids to Junk Food**

Fifty percent of children say that food from a package decorated with a cartoon celebrity such as Shrek tastes better than the same exact food from a plain package, according to a new study. ([Source](#), Link to [study](#))

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### **Reading celebrity gossip mags can encourage eating disorders**

Teenagers who read gossip magazines are more likely to engage in eating disorder behaviours, according to new research ([Source](#))

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## **Violent video games may increase aggression in some but not others**

Playing violent video games can make some adolescents more hostile, particularly those who are less agreeable, less conscientious and easily angered. But for others, it may offer opportunities to learn new skills and improve social networking. ([Source](#))

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## **Online Gaming Bad for Waistline**

University of California at Davis public health researchers say advergames are an entertaining blend of interactive animation, video content and advertising. The media exposes children for extended periods of time to online messages that primarily promote corporate branding and products. The analysis, published in the May issue of the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, leads its authors to recommend increased regulation of food companies that target youth.

([Source](#))

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## **BYU study: Reality shows showing loads of real aggression**

The found that reality television shows contained an average of 52 acts of aggression each hour, compared with 33 acts an hour for non-reality programs. ([Source](#); [BYU PR](#))

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## **[Alcohol Companies Use New Media to Lure Young Drinkers: Report](#)**

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## **Early TV Viewing Linked to Problems in Fourth Grade**

More time spent in front of the TV before reaching kindergarten age appears to be associated with adverse effects on health, lifestyle,

and academic performance later on, researchers found. Each additional hour of TV viewing at age 29 months was associated with less

classroom engagement and lower math scores in fourth grade ( $P \leq 0.05$  for both), according to Linda Pagani, PhD, of the University of

Montreal, and colleagues. The children who watched more TV also had worse dietary habits, higher body mass indexes, played more

video games, and were less physically active, the researchers reported in the May issue of *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

([source](#)) see also: [Watching TV at Age 2 Linked to a Host of Problems at 10](#)

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## **Study: Drinking, R-rated films linked in middle-schoolers**

Middle-schoolers who are forbidden to watch R-rated movies are less likely to start drinking than peers whose

parents are more lenient about such films, new research on 2,406 children shows. Researchers at Dartmouth

Medical School found that among those whose parents let them watch R-rated movies "all the time," almost a quarter had tried a drink without their parents' knowledge.

That compares with barely 3% who tried a drink among those who were "never allowed" to watch R-movies. ([Source](#))

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## **Sex images in media harming kids' mental health**

Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists president Louise Newman said evidence was emerging that childhood

exposure to “developmentally inappropriate” sexualised images and messages was associated with low self-esteem, depression and eating disorders.

([source](#))

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### **Videogames May Hinder Learning in Boys**

Parents who buy their children a video game system might want to be careful that all the fun doesn't interfere with their learning. A new study suggests owning a game system could hinder academic development, at least for young boys ([source](#))

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### **Kids' educational TV programs may do more harm than good**

Children aged between one and two who are exposed to programmes that boast they can improve speech do not necessarily improve their vocabulary. Researchers warned that early exposure to such shows could actually hinder speech development. They found that programmes aimed at one and two-year-olds which boast it can teach children specific words had no effect on learning. ([source](#))

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### **Health Effects of Media on Children and Adolescents (AAP)**

“...recent evidence raises concerns about media's effects on aggression, sexual behavior, substance use, disordered eating, and academic difficulties.” ([Source](#))

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## **New analysis re-asserts video games' link to violence**

A new review of 130 studies “strongly suggests” playing violent video games increases aggressive thoughts and behavior and decreases empathy. The results hold “regardless of research design, gender, age or culture,” says lead researcher Craig Anderson, who directs the Center for the Study of Violence at Iowa State University in Ames. ([Source](#))

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## **Cell Phones, Video Games Don't Spur Teen Headaches**

Cell phones, televisions and computer games aren't giving teenagers headaches, researchers say, but listening to one or two hours of music daily may make their heads throb. ([Source](#))

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## **TV Viewing Associated with Increased Aggression**

Both active and passive TV viewing by three-year-old children appear to be associated with aggressive behaviour in a study published in the journal *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* (November 2009). Studies of TV use by young children have mainly focused on children's direct or active TV viewing without considering general household TV use, according to the authors of the article. According to a previous study, nearly 40% of the children were found to live in homes characterized by heavy TV viewing. ([SOURCE](#))

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## **Effects Of Family Meals, Sleeping And Screen Time On Obesity In Preschoolers**

Preschool children exposed to three household routines – regularly eating family meals, getting adequate sleep,

and limiting screen-viewing time – had a roughly 40 percent lower prevalence of obesity than those exposed to none of these routines. The study, “Household Routines and Obesity in U.S. Preschool-Aged Children,” published in the March issue of *Pediatrics* (appearing online Feb. 8), involved a cross-sectional analysis of 8,550 4-year-old U.S. children in which researchers examined the association between childhood obesity and three household routines. ([Source](#)) Four-year-olds who regularly ate dinner with the family, got enough sleep and watched less than two hours of TV a day were 40 percent less likely to be obese,” said the study’s lead author, Sarah Anderson, an assistant professor of epidemiology in the College of Public Health at Ohio State University in Columbus. She also recommended removing TVs from children’s bedrooms, which can help with limiting screen time and with getting enough sleep. ([Source](#))

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### **Increased Internet Use= Depression?**

A new study suggests that people who use the Internet a lot share something in common – depression. What the study does not find is whether depression causes people to turn to the Internet for their social interactions, or whether excessive use of the Internet “makes” people more depressed. ([Source](#))

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### **Couch Potatoes Endanger Their Lives**

A [study by the Australian Science Media Centre](#) followed 8,800 adults over a six-year period and found that people who watched four hours or more television per day – as compared to less than two hours – had an 80 percent higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease. The findings were independent of traditional risk factors such as smoking or obesity. ([Source](#))

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### **Media Can Drive Kids to Violence (AAP)**

Today's 24-hour smorgasbord of TV, movies, music, cellphones and video games exposes the YouTube generation to media violence –

in particular, explicit lyrics – which can have negative effects on the health and behaviour of young people, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics

([Source](#))

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### **Non-verbal cues on TV promote racial bias**

WASHINGTON – Subtle patterns of non-verbal behaviour on popular TV shows promote racial bias among viewers, according to a new study.

"Today, racial bias is often revealed via more subtle means than outright racial slurs," said study author Max Weisbuch, postdoctoral fellow in psychology at the Tufts University

([Source](#))

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### **Stronger link seen between music and marijuana use among teens**

PITTSBURGH, Dec. 22 – Teens who frequently listen to music that contains references to marijuana are more likely to use the drug than their counterparts with less exposure to such lyrics, according to a University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine study [online](#) now in the journal *Addiction*. ([Source](#))

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### **Even Indirect TV Time May Increase Kids' Aggression**

The more TV a young child watches – and the more time mom and dad spend in front of the tube – the more aggressive the youngster may be, researchers say. Among three-year-olds, both direct TV watching and household TV viewing were significantly associated with childhood aggression. (Source: [MedPageToday](#)) "Early childhood aggression can be problematic for parents, teachers and childhood peers and sometimes is predictive of more serious behavior problems to

come, such as juvenile delinquency, adulthood violence and criminal behavior," according to background information in the article. (Source: [EurekAlert](#))

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### **Texting Affects Quality of Sleep**

A recent study revealed that text messages on mobile phones are making an impact on the quality of sleep for almost 50% of the 16 year olds surveyed. ([Source](#)) A 2009 Nielsen study on teens and media found a 566 percent jump in teen texting rates during the past two years. The average teen sent 435 texts a month in early 2007. Now it's 2,899 per month – 97 a day. ([Source](#))

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### **Videogame Age & Effects Study**

**The average age of an adult video game player is 35 – higher than previously thought, a US study suggests.**

A team from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) also found gamers were less healthy, fatter, and more depressed than non-gamers. ([Source](#))

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### **Screen Time Boosts Kids' Blood Pressure**

**Too Much TV, Computer Use May Elevate Blood Pressure in Young Children**

Aug. 4, 2009 – Too much "screen time," whether it's watching TV, using a computer, or playing a video game, may raise the [blood pressure](#) of young children, a new study shows. (Details [here](#))

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[\*\*'Teen Texting Tendonitis' the Latest Health Epidemic?\*\*](#)

details [here](#)

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### **Car-surfing injuries linked to video games**

July 21, 2009

A group of neurosurgeons analyzing the dangerous teen activity known as car surfing has concluded that its popularity corresponds with the release of the Grand Theft Auto video game series and YouTube clips glorifying the activity. ([Source](#))

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### **MTV Survey Warns of Loud Music's Impact on Hearing**

Children and adults at risk of permanent hearing loss due to repeated exposure to loud music would turn down the sound or use ear protection if told to do so by a health care professional, a new Vanderbilt study performed in conjunction with MTV.com shows. The study "Intentional Exposure to Loud Music: The 2nd MTV.com Survey Reveals an Opportunity to Educate," from Vanderbilt's Roland Eavey, M.D., was released July 13 in the "Journal of Pediatrics".  
[\(source and other details\)](#)

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### **TV Ads Trigger Mindless Eating ( July 1, 2009)**

WEDNESDAY, July 1 (HealthDay News) – Watching food ads on TV leads to a boost in snacking among children and adults, increasing the risk of weight gain, U.S. researchers say. Yale University researchers conducted a series of experiments to test the effects of food commercials on television. One test found that children aged 7 to 11 who watched a half-hour cartoon that included food commercials ate 45 percent more snack food while watching the show than children who watched the same cartoon with non-food commercials.

That increased amount of snacking would lead to a weight gain of nearly 10 pounds a year, unless it was countered by decreased intake of other foods or increased physical activity, the researchers said.

In another experiment, adults who saw TV ads for unhealthy foods ate much more than those who saw ads that featured messages about good nutrition or healthy food.

“This research shows a direct and powerful link between television food advertising and calories consumed by adults and children,” lead author Jennifer Harris, director of marketing initiatives at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale, said in a [news release from the university](#).

“Food advertising triggers automatic eating, regardless of hunger, and is a significant contributor to the obesity epidemic. Reducing unhealthy food advertising to children is critical,” she said.

The [study](#) appears in the July issue of the journal *Health Psychology*. ([Source](#))

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Can Gaming Slow Mental Decline in the Elderly? (TIME Magazine)

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Advertising sets heart racing – new CNN research study uses ‘biometrics’ to show emotional responses to branding

<http://www.cnnasiapacific.com/press/en/content/461/>

Findings released June 15 from a brand new study by CNN International suggest that brands who choose multimedia campaigns to communicate their advertising messages are more memorable to consumers and are more likely to enhance perception of their brands. The results carry weight for brands that place their advertising in an engaging environment, prompting an emotional response from the audience. The CASE study (Cross-platform Advertising Study on Effectiveness and Engagement) consisted of a rigorous two stage approach. Stage one involved a multinational online study of cross-platform effectiveness in which consumers were exposed to diverse media experiences. Stage two measured attention and engagement through a variety of techniques including biometrics, eye tracking and in depth interviews.

"We wanted to show that by complementing advertising on CNN TV with ads on CNN.com and CNN mobile, an advertiser can markedly increase campaign recall leading to positive shifts in brand attitudes", commented Duncan Morris, Vice President, Research, Turner International Asia Pacific. "The fact that these respondents were not primed for an advertising study makes these results even more poignant."

#### Engagement and Biometrics

Body responses such as heart rate, motion, respiratory rate and galvanic skin response (sweating) were translated into measures of "attention" and "engagement" – the Holy Grail for advertisers. These were collected by using a lightweight 'smart vest' which respondents wore while watching CNN programming and advertising.

The biometric research proved that CNN television and online content prompted an emotional response from the audience. Perhaps contrary to popular belief that viewers disengage once scheduled programming ends, the results also showed that engagement actually can increase during ad breaks, as much as 10%.

William Hsu, VP Advertising Sales Asia Pacific, CNN International added "In the current economic climate, CNN is committed to demonstrating ROI for every advertising dollar spent. This study shows it is content that provides the springboard for advertisers to secure meaningful connections with audiences. In conjunction with our recent PWC study, it provides valuable industry insight to help brands market smarter."

#### 'Getting your ad noticed'

The level of attention an advertisement receives impacts the ability of respondents to remember the brand. When respondents viewed advertising online and on mobile, they were more attentive, increasing the likelihood of advertising being noticed and adding to the re-call of the overall campaign.

For example, using the eye-tracking technology which measures the time viewers spend gazing at points on a web or mobile page, users eyes were on the video window on the CNN website for 66-80% of the time that the video story was playing. Video attention is higher still during the pre-roll ad. In fact, on average, the users' eyes are on the pre-roll ad for 77-87% of its duration.

#### Cross-platform

The research showed that despite the high cross-over between the audiences of all the CNN properties, the audience is in a different state of mind when online or using a mobile phone versus watching television. Generally audiences were more attentive (though not necessarily more engaged) when online or mobile than when watching television.

For example, one in five consumers who were exposed to TV advertising for a well known bank were spontaneously able to re-call the brand advertised, however when online and mobile advertising were added, this figure rose to one in three. With video viewing online and television viewing both prompting a strong emotional response from respondents, by combining TV advertising with online advertising, brands are surely onto a winning formula.

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## Glowing TV Screens Keeping Americans Up at Night (HealthDayNews, 6/8/09)

Many generations ago, a dark night sky and fatigue probably signaled it was time to go to sleep. Today, Conan O'Brien, Jon Stewart and the *Desperate Housewives* are more influential in determining bedtimes – and it may be contributing to many Americans' chronic sleep deprivation, a new study says.

In the study, researchers looked at data about the sleep habits and bedtime rituals of 21,475 participants aged 15 or older who completed the [American Time Use Survey](#) between 2003 and 2006.

In the two hours around bedtime, TV viewing was the most common activity, accounting for almost

50 percent of the activities undertaken in the time before bed, according to the study to be presented

Monday at the Associated Professional Sleep Societies annual meeting, in Seattle.

The finding means that TV – rather than hours past sunset or biological signs – has become the most important signal for sleep.

And staying up to catch the end of a favorite show may make people stay up later than they otherwise

would. In the morning, their alarm clocks may jar them awake earlier than they would naturally awaken.

These facets of modern life are potentially reducing sleep time below what is physiologically required,

the researchers noted in a [news release](#) from the [American Academy of Sleep Medicine](#).

"Given the relationship of short sleep duration to health risks, there is concern that many Americans are chronically under-sleeping due to lifestyle choices," study co-author David Dinges, of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in Philadelphia, said in the news

release.

Americans should watch less late-night TV and go to work later in the morning, the researchers suggested.

"While the timing of work may not be flexible, giving up some TV viewing in the evening should be possible to promote adequate sleep," said study co-author Dr. Mathias Basner.

Getting less than seven to eight hours of sleep daily can lead to impaired alertness and has been linked to higher rates of obesity, illness and death. Even so, up to 40 percent of Americans are not getting the recommended amount of sleep at night, according to [the news release](#).

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**Too Much Media May Be Tough on Kids' Health/ Expert warns parents to limit access to computers, TV and more**  
<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/hscout/2009/06/02/hscout627653.html>

TUESDAY, June 2 (HealthDay News) – Easy access to a wide variety of media increases a child's risk for numerous health issues, such as obesity, eating disorders, drug use and early sexual activity, according to a U.S. expert. On average, American children and teens spend more than six hours a day with media such as TV, computers, Internet, video games and VCR or DVD players – more time than they spend per day receiving formal classroom instruction, says Dr. Victor C. Strasburger of the University of New Mexico School of Medicine in Albuquerque. All this media access affects a variety of health issues, he wrote in the [June 3 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association](#), a special theme issue on child and adolescent health.

"The media are not the leading cause of any pediatric health problem in the United States, but they do make a substantial contribution to many health problems," Strasburger said. Among them: violence, sex, drugs, obesity and eating disorders.

Parents, teachers and clinicians need to be educated about these connections, and student education about media should be mandatory in schools, he recommended.

"Parents have to change the way their children access the media – not permitting TV sets or Internet connections in the child's bedroom, limiting entertainment screen time to less than two hours per day, and co-viewing with their children and adolescents. Research has shown that media effects are magnified significantly when there is a TV set in the child's or adolescent's bedroom," Strasburger wrote.

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### **'Cell Phone Elbow' – A New Ill for the Wired Age**

**By Jennifer Thomas**

TUESDAY, June 2 (HealthDay News) – First came Nintendo thumb. Then, Guitar Hero wrist.

Now, for the latest affliction of the wired age, it's cell phone elbow.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20090602/hl\\_hsn/cellphoneelbowanewillforthewiredage](http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20090602/hl_hsn/cellphoneelbowanewillforthewiredage)

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### **Study: TV can impair speech development of young children**

Originally published June 1, 2009

By Liz Szabo, USA TODAY

A study released Monday adds to the debate over whether television impairs children's language development.

The study finds that parents and children virtually stop talking to each other when the TV is on, even if they're in the same room.

For every hour in front of the TV, parents spoke 770 fewer words to children, according to a study of 329 children,

ages 2 months to 4 years, in the June issue of [Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine](#).

Adults usually speak about 941 words an hour.

Children vocalized less, too, says author [Dimitri Christakis](#) of the Seattle Children's Research Institute.

In some cases, parents may have spoken less because they sat a child in

front of a TV and left the room, he says. In others, parents simply zoned out themselves while watching TV with a child. Researchers didn't note the content of the TV shows.

Parents may not realize how little they interact with children when a TV is on, Christakis says. A mother may think she's engaged with a baby because they're both on the floor playing blocks. But if a TV is on in the background, the two of them talk much less, he says.

That may help explain earlier studies finding that babies who watch a lot of TV know fewer words, although they catch up to their peers by 16 months, Christakis says. "Babies learn language from hearing it spoken," he says.

Christakis and his colleagues fitted children with digital devices that recorded everything they heard or said one day a month for an average of six months. A speech-recognition program, which could differentiate TV content from human voices, compared the number of words exchanged when televisions were on or off.

[Victor Strasburger](#), a professor of pediatrics at the University of New Mexico, describes the latest report as "an excellent, creative study."

It's the seventh study to suggest that TV hurts children's language development, Strasburger says. A March report from Harvard Medical School found that watching TV neither helped nor harmed children's language skills.

Though Christakis acknowledges that there is still some debate about whether watching television is harmful, he says there's no evidence to show that it's helpful. That's why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV for babies under age 2.

"We need to avoid parking babies in front of screens," Strasburger says.

"Parents need to realize they need to be the primary entertainment for their babies. Parents are movie stars when their kids are babies. It doesn't last long."

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### **Shocking images on cigarette packs can deter smokers**

GENEVA (Reuters) – Cigarette packages should show graphic images of yellow teeth, blackened gums, protruding neck tumors and bleeding brains to alert smokers to their disease risks, the World Health Organization said on Friday.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20090529/hl\\_nm/us\\_tobacco\\_un](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20090529/hl_nm/us_tobacco_un)

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### **Texting May Be Taking A Toll on Teens**

The phenomenon is beginning to worry physicians and psychologists, who say it is leading to anxiety, distraction in school, falling grades, repetitive stress injury and sleep deprivation.

URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/26/health/26teen.html>

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### **TV Ads Play Role In Child Obesity**

Posted on: Monday, 11 May 2009, 06:40 CDT

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1686154/tv\\_ads\\_play\\_role\\_in\\_child\\_obesity/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1686154/tv_ads_play_role_in_child_obesity/)

According to a new study released on Friday, junk food commercials constitute an average of two-thirds of television food advertisements shown during hours children are most likely to be watching.

At the top of the list were Germany and the United States, whose junk food commercials made up some 90 percent of their televised food ads. At the bottom were Britain and Australia with roughly 50 percent.

Researchers say they are urging government action to curb the amount of television marketing of this sort in an effort to combat youth obesity.

"Internationally, children are exposed to high volumes of unhealthy food and beverage advertising on television," the research group told the [European Congress on Obesity](#) in Amsterdam.

"Limiting this food marketing is an important preventative strategy for childhood obesity."

Worldwide, the [International Obesity Task Force](#) estimates that some 177 million children and teens under the age of 18 are overweight or obese. Of these, they say, roughly 22 million are overweight children under the age of five.

Among the many risks associated with diabetes, one of the most frequent amongst children is the rapidly growing rate of type 2 diabetes, or non-inherited diabetes. The expensive treatments associated with diabetes have many governments concerned that their already tightly-budgeted national health systems could be stretched beyond their limits.

The increase in sedentary lifestyles, including hours a day sitting in front of computers or television, has also been identified as a joint factor contributing to skyrocketing obesity rates throughout the western world.

"There is a lot of attention on unhealthy food marketing as an influence on childhood obesity and a lot of governments are reluctant to regulate," said Bridget Kelly a nutrition researcher for the [Cancer Council NSW in Australia](#) and co-author of the study.

"So most countries in the study don't have regulations on food advertising."

The study examined television programming trends in Australia, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe and North and South America. They observed that the number of advertisements for fast food, sweets and high-fat snacks significantly increased during the times

when youths were most likely to be tuned in.

"Children see around 4,000 to 6,000 food advertisements on television a year and between 2,000 and 4,000 are for unhealthy foods," explained Kelley in an interview. "So even if you are in countries that are advertising less to children, that is still a lot."

Researchers concede, however, that it is difficult to establish a direct causal connection between junk food advertisements and obesity.

Still, they argue that television marketing is a significant factor in shaping what kind of foods children prefer.

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### **Girls With Sexy Avatars Face Greater Risks Online**

May 26, 2009 04:26 PM ET | Nancy Shute

<http://health.usnews.com/blogs/on-parenting/2009/05/26/girls-with-sexy-avatars-face-greater-risks-online.html>

Do you know what your daughter's online avatar looks like? If it's sexually provocative—more Bratz than American Girl doll—it's time for a chat. "I'm amazed at the grotesqueness of some of these avatars," says Jennie Noll, a developmental psychologist and associate professor of pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center who asked 173 teenage girls ages 14 to 17 to make avatars, then rated their provocativeness—skimpy clothing, body piercings, exaggerated curves. Girls who created provocative avatars were more likely to get sexual come-ons online, not surprisingly, and also more apt to agree to an in-person encounter with someone they met online. Noll's study is published in the current issue of *Pediatrics*. The girls who chose provocative avatars were also more likely to be preoccupied with sex—and, Noll speculates, they might be more likely to try on the role.

Parents can use avatars as an early warning system, Noll says. "Parents should be interested and aware of how their children are presenting themselves online," she says, and prepared to talk with them about "the implications of presenting themselves as a sexual being online." The next step: Run through scenarios about what could happen if someone wanted to meet up in real life, and role-play how to fend off a come-on that could lead to more than they're able to handle. Not all offline encounters end in sexual abuse or exploitation, of

course. But Noll, who studies the effects of child sexual abuse, cautions that the potential is there. Avatars also give us parents a doorway to discussing online profiles and the fact that what might seem cool to a 14-year-old will seem decidedly uncool to college admissions officers, employers, and her boyfriend's parents. "It's the first snapshot people get of you," Noll says. "Younger adolescents don't get this, because [social networking] is so much a part of their everyday life."

For more on the big and troubling issue on how popular culture oversexualizes childhood, check out *So Sexy So Soon*, a book by Diane Levin and Jean Kilbourne that came out last year. A parent's best defense, Levin and Kilbourne say, is to talk to your kids early and often about what you don't like about sexual images in pop culture, while also giving them a chance to tell you what they like, and why. (Here's my [interview with Levin about \*So Sexy So Soon\*](#), along with my distillation of her [advice for parents](#).) Study after study shows that the best predictor of a child safely navigating the risks of the teenage years is having involved parents—something that Noll found in her study, too. Here's more on [how parents can manage kids' use of social media](#), particularly networking sites like MySpace and Facebook.

So, kid, put a sweater on that avatar!

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### **Media Images of Alcohol Can Drive You to Drink**

#### **Scenes in films, TV commercials have measurable impact, study finds**

March 4, 2009 **By Amanda Gardner** HealthDay Reporter (NOTE: links embedded in this story added by Frank Baker)

WEDNESDAY, March 4 (HealthDay News) — Young men who watched the movie *American Pie* with accompanying commercials for alcohol were more apt to grab a beer or glass of wine from the refrigerator, compared to those who watched a movie without the drinking prompts.

This study shows for the first time the effect of on-screen depictions of alcohol and their influence on consumers' behavior, said the researchers, who are from Canada and the Netherlands.

"It's one of those things the majority of people have assumed to be the case, but it's nice to have the empirical evidence," said Jeffrey T. Parsons, chair of psychology at Hunter College in New York City. Parsons was not involved with the study, which was published online March 4 in the journal *Alcohol and Alcoholism*. (Full study available [here](#))

But, Parsons added, the study had limitations.

"It was done just with young men, and there are a lot of differences in the role of gender and alcohol," he said. "It's also a Dutch study that used American movies. Part of me wonders if it's just bad American movies that make people drink."

The study is unlikely to be the last word on the subject, Parsons added.

The new research isn't the only new troubling data coming out on alcohol and alcohol abuse.

On Tuesday, a report in the March issue of the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* said that an estimated 11 percent to 20 percent of U.S. teens have T-shirts, headwear, jewelry, key chains and other paraphernalia emblazoned with brands of alcoholic beverages. These children seem to be more prone to end up being binge drinkers, the Dartmouth researchers noted.

For the new study, 40 pairs of unsuspecting men aged 18 to 29 were invited into a lab that doubled as a "home cinema," complete with fridge (stocked with both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks), a leather couch, large-screen TV, nibbles and an ashtray.

The men, who were given the option of a free taxi home if they drank three or more bottles of beer or wine, were randomly assigned to watch *American Pie* with and without alcohol ads, or characters consuming alcohol, or *40 Days and 40 Nights*, again with and without the alcohol content.

Those who watched the segments that included alcohol drank an average of three 200-milligram bottles of alcohol. Those watching the “neutral” segments drank half that amount.

The findings, which need to be confirmed in other groups of people and in larger studies, may argue for a sort of “rating” system regarding alcohol in movies, the authors stated. Dr. Kathryn J. Kotrla, chairwoman of psychiatry and behavioral science at the Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine, said the new study was “reminiscent of the imaging studies, for example, looking at cocaine addiction.”

“It would be fascinating to follow the study up with neuroimaging studies with alcoholics ... to see if the same reward pathways are triggered in the brain,” she said. “Why that’s so important is that it bypasses the debate, is alcoholism a failure of will or a disease? It puts [the debate] smack dab in the neuroscience arena, which, in fact, is where it needs to be.”

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### **Too much TV linked to higher asthma risk**

Tue Mar 3, 12:42 am ET

(Hyperlinks in the story below were added by media educator Frank Baker)  
LONDON (Reuters) – Children who watch television for more than two hours a day have twice the risk of developing asthma, British researchers reported Tuesday.

Asthma affects more than 300 million people worldwide and is the most common children’s chronic illness. Symptoms include wheezing, shortness of breath, coughing and chest tightness.

A study published in the [journal Thorax](#) may help link asthma, estimated to account for one in 250 deaths globally each year, to obesity and lack of exercise, experts said.

“There has been a recent suggestion that breathing patterns associated with sedentary behavior could lead to developmental changes in the lungs and wheezing illnesses in children,” Andrea Sherriff of the University of Glasgow and colleagues wrote.

Sherriff and colleagues studied more than 3,000 children from birth until nearly the age of 12.

The parents were questioned annually on wheezing symptoms among their children and whether a doctor had diagnosed asthma as they grew up. The researchers also analyzed how much television the children watched.

They did not consider video games or personal computers, which were not as common in the mid 1990s when the children were growing up, the researchers added.

The study found that 6 percent of children at around age 12 who had no symptoms of the disease growing up had asthma.

But children who watched television for more than two hours daily were almost twice as likely to have been diagnosed with the condition as those who watched less.

"The findings add to a wealth of evidence linking a lack of exercise and being overweight with an increased risk of asthma," Elaine Vickers of [Asthma UK](#), who was not involved in the study, said in a statement.

"But this study is the first to directly link sedentary behavior at a very young age to a higher risk of asthma later in childhood."

In some countries as many as 30 percent of children develop the inflammatory disease, according to the World Health Association.

(Reporting by Michael Kahn, Editing by Maggie Fox and Phakamisa Ndzamela)

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### **Study: Internet Addiction May Fuel Teen Aggression**

**Tuesday , February 24, 2009**



Teenagers who are preoccupied with their Internet time may be more prone to aggressive behavior, researchers reported Monday.

In a study of more than 9,400 Taiwanese teenagers, the researchers found that those with signs of Internet "addiction" were more likely to say they had hit, shoved or threatened someone in the past year.

The link remained when the investigators accounted for several other factors – including the teenagers' scores on measures of self-esteem and depression, as well as their exposure to TV violence.

The findings, published online by the Journal of Adolescent Health, do not however prove that Internet addiction breeds violent behavior in children.

It is possible that violence-prone teenagers are more likely to obsessively use the Internet, explained lead researcher Dr. Chih-Hung Ko, of Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan.

However, the findings add to evidence from other studies that media – whether TV, movies or video games – can influence children's behavior. They also suggest that parents should pay close attention to their teenagers' Internet use, and the potential effects on their real-life behavior, Ko told Reuters Health.

According to Ko's team, some signs of Internet addiction include preoccupation with online activities; "withdrawal" symptoms, like moodiness and irritability, after a few Internet-free days; and skipping other activities to devote more time to online ones.

In this study, teenagers who fit the addiction profile generally were more aggression-prone than their peers. But the type of Internet activity appeared to matter as well.

Online chatting, gambling and gaming, and spending time in online forums or adult pornography sites were all linked to aggressive behavior. In contrast, teens who devoted their time to online research and studying were less likely than their peers to be violence-prone.

According to Ko, certain online activities may encourage kids to "release their anger" or otherwise be aggressive in ways they normally would not in the real world. Whether this eventually pushes them to be more

aggressive in real life is not yet clear, the researcher said.

Ko recommended that parents talk to their children about their Internet use and their general attitudes toward violence.

SOURCE: [Journal of Adolescent Health](#)

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### **Association between lyrics with degrading sex, early sexual experience: Study**

February 24, 2009 Canadian Press

TORONTO – High exposure to lyrics that describe degrading sex is associated with high levels of sexual behaviour in teens, a new study suggests.

The research, published Tuesday in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, was conducted in three large urban high schools in the Pittsburgh area, and involved asking Grade 9 students about the number of hours a day they listen to music and their favourite musical artists.

"Music exposure is growing ... there is now unprecedented access to music and it's also becoming more direct, more explicit," said co-author [Dr. Brian Primack](#) of the Center for Research on Health Care at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

"Adolescents are exposed to six to eight hours of mass media messages per day, and since it is such an important exposure, we need to know if this is affecting health."

He noted, for example, that data have shown that up to 25 per cent of American teenage girls have sexually transmitted diseases.

STDs are particularly problematic in poor communities, Primack said, and that was a reason for focusing on three urban high schools where about half the kids take part in a lunch program – indicating they fall below a

certain income level.

"We divided the cohort into three ... those who were exposed to the lowest amount (of music with degrading references), those who were exposed to sort of the medium amount, those who were exposed to the most," he said.

"And those who were exposed to the most were more than twice as likely to have had sexual intercourse, and that's even controlling for all of the other factors that we looked at that we thought might be related to uptake of sexual intercourse."

One limitation of the findings was that the teenagers were self-reporting.

"We didn't actually have their iPods in our hands, but what we did was we asked people to report the number of hours that they listen, both on a weekday and a weekend day," Primack explained.

"It's an approximation because we can't ask them every single song that they've ever listened to, but the way it is with young people in this particular demographic, their favourite artist is generally quite representative of all of the things that they listen to."

Daniel Levitin, a cognitive neuroscientist at McGill University in Montreal, said the study "clearly adds to our body of knowledge about the connection between musical lyrics and ... experiences of young people."

But Levitin, author of the bestselling book "[This is Your Brain on Music,](#)" said the study wasn't designed in a way that it could tell us about any causes of the young people's behaviour.

"The important thing to bear in mind is whatever it is that's causing young people to engage in increasingly risky sexual activity at a younger age – we don't know whether there's some third factor out there in the world that's causing them both to engage in that activity and to seek out this music."

He cautioned against extrapolating the findings to other centres, noting there might be a number of reasons Pittsburgh is special.

"They didn't do a study across all of the United States, let alone across all of North America. It's a possible limitation of the study. Maybe these results apply only to Pittsburgh, and you wouldn't find similar associations in Philadelphia or Calgary or Prince Edward Island, for that matter."

Jane Brown, a professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, said the findings corroborate a couple of previous studies.

"So now we have three studies that have found a similar relationship, so that helps support the notion that there is a relationship here, something's going on, something perhaps worth looking into."

Parents need to pay more attention to this, and help their teens choose healthier, less degrading music, she advised.

"Secondly, I would like to see the musicians' community take some responsibility for this," she said.

"And thirdly, we can teach what we call media literacy, which is to help kids be more critical media users, or more intelligent media users, so that they know it's not in their best interest to be modelling sexually degrading images."

Primack agreed with the need for media literacy.

"If we give young people the ability to analyze and evaluate all those messages for themselves, so they can hopefully understand a little bit more about the fact that these messages are not necessarily reflecting real life, then they might not be prone to simply imitate what they hear."

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#### **Study: Violent media numb viewers to the pain of others**

February 19th, 2009 in Medicine & Health / Psychology

<http://www.physorg.com/news154282508.html>

**(PhysOrg.com) – Violent video games and movies make people numb to the pain and suffering of others, according to a research report published in the March 2009 issue of *Psychological Science*.**

The report details the findings of two studies conducted by University of Michigan professor Brad Bushman and Iowa State University professor Craig Anderson.

The studies fill an important research gap in the literature on the impact of violent media. In earlier work, Bushman and Anderson demonstrated that exposure to violent media produces physiological desensitization—lowering heart rate and skin conductance—when viewing scenes of actual violence a short time later. But the current research demonstrates that violent media also affect someone's willingness to offer help to an injured person, in a field study as well as in a laboratory experiment.

The impact of violent media. New research shows that playing violent video games and watching violent moves make people less empathic and sensitive to the suffering of others.

"These studies clearly show that violent media exposure can reduce helping behavior," said Bushman, professor of psychology and communications and a research professor at the U-M Institute for Social Research.

"People exposed to media violence are less helpful to others in need because they are 'comfortably numb' to the pain and suffering of others, to borrow the title of a Pink Floyd song," he said.

In one of the studies, 320 college students played either a violent or a nonviolent video game for approximately 20 minutes. A few minutes later, they overheard a staged fight that ended with the "victim" sustaining a sprained ankle and groaning in pain.

People who had played a violent game took significantly longer to help the victim than those who played a nonviolent game—73 seconds compared to

16 seconds. People who had played a violent game were also less likely to notice and report the fight. And if they did report it, they judged it to be less serious than did those who had played a nonviolent game.

In the second study, the participants were 162 adult moviegoers. The researchers staged a minor emergency outside the theater in which a young woman with a bandaged ankle and crutches "accidentally" dropped her crutches and struggled to retrieve them. The researchers timed how long it took moviegoers to retrieve the crutches. Half were tested before they went into the theater, to establish the helpfulness of people attending violent vs. nonviolent movies. Half were tested after seeing either a violent or a nonviolent movie. Participants who had just watched a violent movie took over 26 percent longer to help than either people going into the theater or people who had just watched a nonviolent movie.

The studies are part of an on-going research program into the causes and consequences of human aggression conducted by Bushman, who is also affiliated with VU University Amsterdam.

Provided by University of Michigan

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### Media Exposure and Fast Food Consumption

(NaturalNews) When we slouch on the couch and spend hours staring at that colorful electronic box called a television, we are actually, subconsciously, taking in hours of subtle indoctrination via TV commercials. At the same time, we are also allowing ourselves to lapse into a sedentary lifestyle, snacking on junk food as a complementary habit. And these cause-and-effect links are very real, as revealed in a recent University of Minnesota study, which found that teens who watch more than 5 hours of TV each day are more likely to become fast food junkies when they reach young adulthood.

### **Details and Findings of Study**

The study, published online in the *International Journal of*

*Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, had looked at data on 1,366 students from high school and 564 students from middle school. Information on the number of hours every day which the students spent watching TV was collated and compared with information on their dietary habits five years later as they reached young adulthood.

The researchers found that high school students who watched over 5 hours of TV each day consumed less fruits, vegetables, whole grains and calcium-rich foods as young adults, and instead had a higher intake of fast food, fried foods, snack foods, sugary drinks as well as foods with trans fats.

It seems the advertisements for fast food restaurants and other similar junk foods are having an impact. "Television watching impacts diet choices adolescents make five years later," said Daheia Barr-Anderson, an assistant professor of kinesiology and the leader of the study. She further conjectured that snacking during TV time makes the young ones more likely to eat the foods which are being advertised.

### **Important Issues**

This study has brought our attention to an important issue – the impact of the media is real and very pronounced. "This research tugs not so gently at the wool in front of all of our eyes – revealing that heavy TV viewing, especially of food advertising – makes a difference to our children's diets," said Frederick J Zimmerman, an assistant professor at the Child Health Institute of the University of Washington.

"This research suggests that heavy TV-viewing adolescents consume about 200 more calories per day than those who watch a moderate amount of TV. That is a lot of calories by anyone's count," he said. Zimmerman also added that these findings will not be unexpected for people familiar with research connecting TV, advertising and diet.

### **Parents Must Take Note**

The kids are, well, still very young, and it is clear that parents have an important role to play in influencing their habits and choices. This is another key issue which we need to take note of. "Parents need to adhere to the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation that children watch less than two hours of quality television per day," said Barr-Anderson.

"Parents need to restrict what their kids are eating and try and provide a better example for their kids, making sure they are getting the nutrients and proper food that they need as opposed to the high-fatty foods, high-sugar foods, low-nutrient-dense foods," she added.

Kimberly M Thompson, an associate professor of risk analysis and decision science at the Harvard School of Public Health, agreed that parents play a critical role. And this applies whether the cause of bad food choices is the TV ads, the lapsing into sedentary lifestyles, or both.

"This study is a clear wake-up call that entertainment media matter when it comes to health. Given the current obesity and overweight crisis in America, this study provides clear evidence that kids and parents should make a point of reducing sedentary time spent in front of a TV screen," she said.

### **The Young are in Trouble**

Another recent worrying study on the state of health of our young ones include how poor sleep and lack of sleep were found to be causing heightened blood pressure, or a state of "prehypertension", in healthy adolescents. This increase could not be explained by other factors such as obesity, socioeconomic status or known comorbidities. Read more about that study [here](#).

Even more alarming was what a study which was presented at the American Heart Association's 2008 annual meeting in New Orleans revealed – that children and teenagers had arteries which were as degenerated as middle aged adults. The study had

found that more than 50% of the 70 young persons who were involved in the study were, by “vascular age” terms, about 3 decades older than their actual age. Read more about that study [here](#).

Intuitively, we could probably link all the adverse health effects. Too much late night TV, for example, would be a contributing factor for lack of sleep, while overindulgence in junk foods also harms arterial and heart health.

What can parents do?

“For those looking to nudge their families in the right direction, implement a rule in your home of no eating while the TV is on. Or if that’s too tough, then insist that only [fruits](#) and vegetables and water get consumed while viewing TV. You could also require that for every hour of TV viewed, each member of the family needs to engage in at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise,” suggested Thompson.

## Sources

Adult Fast-Food Diets Tied to Too Much TV as Teen  
(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dy...>)

Sleep quality and elevated blood pressure in adolescents.  
(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>)

Obese Kids Have Middle-Aged Arteries  
(<http://www.newsweek.com/id/168702>)

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## Marlboro top choice of regular teen smokers (AP)

By MARTHA IRVINE, AP National Writer Martha Irvine, Ap National Writer – Thu Feb 12, 4:57 pm ET

CHICAGO – Marlboro, the cigarette favored by adults, is also the runaway favorite of teens who regularly smoke, according to a new federal report released Thursday. The results led anti-smoking advocates to complain that

the same advertising that's supposed to target adults is also influencing teens, even though smoking rates for that age group have dropped in recent years.

"Cigarettes are still the most heavily advertised drug in America," said Dr. Victor Strasburger, a professor of pediatrics at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine and a spokesman for the American Academy of Pediatrics. "It's sad."

The report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 81 percent of established teen smokers preferred the same three brands favored by adults: Marlboro was the choice for 52 percent of high school students; Newport by 21 percent and Camel by 13 percent. For middle school students, the percentages were 43 percent, 26 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

Newport was the overwhelming choice for African-American students, with more than three-quarters of black high school smokers choosing that brand.

The results come from a survey of 54,301 regular smokers, part of the 2004 and 2006 National Youth Tobacco Survey of nearly 5 million 12- to 17-year-olds.

The findings mirror the adult population. The 2007 National Study on Drug Use and Health found that the most popular brands smoked by U.S. adults also were Marlboro, Newport and Camel.

David Sutton, a spokesman at Altria Group Inc., which owns Philip Morris USA and the Marlboro brand, said that adult influence was more likely a factor than advertising. He said his company has curtailed it by 46 percent in the last decade. Instead, he said the company focuses on direct-mail marketing to adults and advertising at retailers that sell its brands.

David Howard, a spokesman at the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., maker of Camel cigarettes, said it's clear from Camel's third-place ranking that the company has succeeded in avoiding marketing to young people.

Both tobacco spokesmen also mentioned signs that the teen smoking rate is dropping. An annual survey by University of Michigan found that, in 2008,

smoking rates among American teens were at the lowest levels since the survey began in 1991.

Even so, anti-smoking advocates are calling for even tougher restrictions on advertising and for more no-smoking campaigns. The CDC is urging Congress to give the Food and Drug Administration the power to regulate tobacco products and marketing – and encouraged funding for anti-smoking campaigns.

Such campaigns include the American Legacy Foundation's national "truth" campaign. Launched in 2000, it includes an ad showing young people unloading hundreds of body bags and stacking them in the street outside a major tobacco company to illustrate smoking-related deaths.

"We try to have teens rebel against tobacco companies by not smoking. The whole strategy is to make smoking not cool," said Donna Vallone, an official with the Legacy Foundation.

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On the Net:

Monitoring the Future survey: <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

American Legacy Foundation: <http://www.americanlegacy.org/>

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#### **New CDC Study Shows Tobacco Marketing Influences Kids:**

**Other Studies Show Effectiveness of Tobacco Prevention Campaigns** WASHINGTON, Feb. 12 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ – The following is a statement by Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids: (Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080918/CFTFKL0GO>)

Several scientific studies released today provide powerful new evidence that tobacco marketing causes kids to smoke, while anti-tobacco advertising campaigns prevent smoking. These studies send a loud and clear message to the nation's policy makers: We need less tobacco marketing and more tobacco prevention.

It is critical that Congress this year pass legislation granting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate tobacco products and marketing, which among other things would crack down on tobacco marketing that appeals to kids. It is also imperative that Congress and the states increase funding for programs proven to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit.

**CDC Study: Youth Smokers Overwhelmingly Prefer Three Most Heavily Advertised Brands**

A study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) finds that the three most heavily advertised cigarette brands – Philip Morris' Marlboro, Lorillard's Newport and R.J. Reynolds' Camel – continue to be the preferred brands of youth smokers. These brands were preferred by 78.2 percent of middle school smokers and 86.5 percent of high school smokers. Marlboro is preferred by more high school smokers, 52.3 percent, than all other brands combined.

This study indicates that, despite limited restrictions placed on tobacco marketing by the 1998 state tobacco settlement, tobacco marketing continues to have a large and disproportionate impact on the nation's youth. While tobacco companies claim they do not market to kids, they're sure doing a good job of getting kids to use their products. This study was published in the February 13, 2009, issue of the CDC journal *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* ([www.cdc.gov/mmwr](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr))

Congress can protect our nation's children by granting the FDA authority to regulate the manufacturing, marketing and sale of tobacco products. This bill would impose specific restrictions on tobacco marketing that appeals to children. It would limit tobacco advertising in stores and in magazines with significant teen readership to black-and-white text only, eliminating the colorful images that depict smoking as cool and glamorous. It would ban outdoor tobacco advertising near schools and playgrounds, end tobacco sponsorships of sports and entertainment events, and require stores to place tobacco products behind the counter. The bill would also grant the FDA and the states authority to further limit tobacco marketing.

In addition to these marketing restrictions, the legislation would require larger and more effective health warnings, ban misleading terms such as “light” and “low-tar,” strictly regulate all health claims about tobacco products, require disclosure of the contents of and changes to tobacco products, and empower the FDA to mandate changes in tobacco products, such as the reduction or removal of harmful ingredients.

### **Three Studies Finds **truth(R)** Prevention Campaign Reduces Smoking and Saves Money**

In addition to the new CDC studies, three new research papers find that **truth(R)**, the national youth smoking prevention campaign conducted by the American Legacy Foundation, has been both highly effective and cost-effective in preventing America’s youth from starting to smoke. One study found that **truth(R)** was directly responsible for keeping 450,000 teens from starting to smoke during its first four years, while a second study found that the campaign not only paid for itself in its first two years, but also saved between \$1.9 billion and \$5.4 billion in health care costs. These two studies were published online today by the *American Journal of Prevention Medicine* ([www.ajpm-online.net](http://www.ajpm-online.net)). A third study in the February issue of *Ethnicity and Health* found that youth exposed to the **truth(R)** campaign were more likely to have anti-tobacco beliefs and attitudes.

These studies show that tobacco prevention campaigns are a vital element of the overall effort to reduce tobacco use and its devastating consequences. Unfortunately, both nationally and in the states, these programs are badly underfunded and fall woefully short of the \$13.4 billion a year the tobacco companies spend to market their deadly and addictive products. This year, the states will collect \$24.6 billion in revenue from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend less than three percent of it on tobacco prevention and cessation programs. No state currently meets the CDC’s recommendation for funding such programs and many states are considering cuts to their programs.

It is critical that both the federal government and the states increase funding for programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit. As underscored by the new studies, the evidence is abundantly clear that

these programs not only reduce smoking and save lives, they save money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs. It is penny-wise and pound-foolish to skimp on funding for these programs.

Today's new studies follow a landmark August 2008 report by the National Cancer Institute that reached the federal government's strongest conclusions to date that 1) tobacco advertising and promotion cause kids to smoke and 2) mass media campaigns are effective at reducing smoking, especially when combined with other tobacco control strategies.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 400,000 people and costing the nation nearly \$100 billion in health care bills year. The Institute of Medicine, the President's Cancer Plan and other public health authorities have recommended a clear plan for winning the fight against tobacco use. It includes FDA regulation of tobacco products, well-funded tobacco prevention and cessation programs, and other proven measures such as higher tobacco taxes and smoke-free workplace laws. It is critical that Congress and other elected leaders take urgent action to protect our children and the nation's health.

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#### **Too much television can make children 'mentally ill'**

Too much television and time spent on the internet can make children mentally ill, an in-depth report has concluded.

[http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/children\\_shealth/4431014/Too-much-television-can-make-children-mentally-ill.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/children_shealth/4431014/Too-much-television-can-make-children-mentally-ill.html)

**Excessive exposure makes a child materialistic, which in turn**

# **affects their relationship with their parents and their health.**

That is one of the conclusions of a new wide-ranging survey into British childhood, produced for the Children's Society.

It says that children are part of a new form of consumerism, with under 16 year-olds spending £3 billion of their own money each year on clothes, snacks, music, video games and magazines.

The report claims that some advertisers "explicitly exploit the mechanism of peer pressure, while painting parents as buffoons" and that in its most extreme form, advertising persuades children that "you are what you own".

In addition the "constant exposure" to celebrities through, TV soaps, dramas and chat shows is having a detrimental effect.

It says: "Children today know in intimate detail the lives of celebrities who are richer than they will ever be, and mostly better-looking. This exposure inevitably raises aspirations and reduces self-esteem."

It adds the way celebrities are portrayed "automatically encourages the excessive pursuit of wealth and beauty."

This "media-driven consumerism" is having a negative effect on a child's wellbeing, the report says.

It highlights a study into the effect of consumerism on the psychological wellbeing of 10-13 year-olds.

That study found: "Other things being equal, the more a child is exposed to the media (television and Internet), the more materialistic she becomes, the worse she relates to her parents and the worse her mental health."

The Good Childhood inquiry, compiled by more than 35,000 contributors is

independent of the Church of England affiliated society but has been endorsed by the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams.

It takes an in-depth look at the changing face of childhood and family life in Britain, and the challenges facing youngsters today.

The report has found that only a quarter of children with mental health problems get any specialist help, and one in 10 five to 16-year-olds now have mental health issues, ranging from anxiety or depression to conduct disorders such as destructive behaviour.

It claims that the upward trend of violence in the media in general, is making children violent and causing tension within the family.

The report says: "We know from controlled studies that exposure to violence can breed violence.

"So it seems likely that the upward trend in media violence is helping to produce the upward trend in violent behaviour – and also the growth of psychological conflict in family relationships."

The report also notes that commercial pressures have led to the "premature sexualisation" of young people.

It notes that young people are having sex earlier because of "many forces", including "more privacy when both parents work, more contraception, commercial pressures toward premature sexualisation, and fundamental changes in attitude".

The report recommends that sex and relationships, and understanding of the media should be a compulsory part of the personal, social and health curriculum.

And it says advertising of unhealthy foods and alcohol should be banned before 9pm.

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## **Alcohol adverts attract the young**

[http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2009-02/bc-aaa020409.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-02/bc-aaa020409.php)

Alcohol advertising and marketing may lead to underage drinking. A large systematic review of more than 13,000 people, published in the open access journal *BMC Public Health*, suggests that exposure to ads and product placements, even those supposedly not directed at young people, leads to increased alcohol consumption.

Lesley Smith and David Foxcroft from Oxford Brookes University collated information from seven rigorously selected studies, featuring information on 13,255 participants. This systematic review, funded by the Alcohol and Education Research Council (AERC), is the first to study the effects of advertising, product placement in films, games, sporting events and music videos, depictions of drinking in various media, and exposure to product stands in shops. According to Smith, "Our work provides strong empirical evidence to inform the policy debate on the impact of alcohol advertising on young people, and policy groups may wish to revise or strengthen their policy recommendations in the light of this stronger evidence".

The authors found that exposure to TV alcohol advertisements was associated with an increased tendency to drink, as were magazine advertisements and concession stands at sporting events or concerts. Hours spent watching films, playing games and watching music videos also correlated with young peoples' tendency to consume alcoholic beverages. Smith said, "All seven studies demonstrated significant effects across a range of different exposure variables and outcome measures. One showed that for each additional hour of TV viewing per day the average risk of starting to drink increased by 9% during the following 18 months. Another found that for each additional hour of exposure to alcohol use depicted in popular movies there was a 15% increase in likelihood of having tried alcohol 13 to 26 months later".

The authors recommend that counter-advertising, social marketing techniques and other prevention options such as parenting programmes, price increases and limiting availability may be useful to limit alcohol problems in young people.

###

## Notes to Editors

1. The effect of alcohol advertising, marketing and portrayal on drinking behaviour in young people: systematic review of prospective cohort studies

Lesley A Smith and David R Foxcroft

*BMC Public Health* (in press)

During embargo, article available here:

[http://www.biomedcentral.com/imedia/1206897133174347\\_article.pdf?random=783367](http://www.biomedcentral.com/imedia/1206897133174347_article.pdf?random=783367)

After the embargo, article available at journal website:

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth/>

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2. *BMC Public Health* is an open access journal publishing original peer-reviewed research articles in all aspects of epidemiology and public health medicine. *BMC Public Health* (ISSN 1471-2458) is indexed/tracked/covered by PubMed, MEDLINE, CAS, Scopus, EMBASE, Thomson Scientific (ISI) and Google Scholar.

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# **TV & Teen Depression**

## **February 4 2009**

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) – Concerned that your adolescent is watching too much TV? A new study gives parents good reason to be concerned. Researchers reported this week that greater exposure to TV during the teenage years appears to raise the risk of depression in young adulthood, especially among males.

Dr. Brian A. Primack, of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and colleagues studied the media habits of roughly 4,100 healthy non-depressed adolescents. They asked the adolescents how many hours they spent during the last week watching TV or videos, playing computer games or listening to the radio.

The adolescents reported an average of 5.68 hours of media exposure each day, including 2.3 hours of TV viewing per day.

Seven years later (at an average age of 21.8), the study subjects were screened and 308 (7.4 percent) had developed symptoms of depression.

According to the report, published in the Archives of General Psychiatry, for each hour of TV viewed per day, the teens had a statistically significant greater likelihood of developing depression in young adulthood.

Given the same amount of media exposure, young women were less likely to develop symptoms of depression than were young men.

"We did not find a consistent relationship between development of depressive symptoms and exposure to videocassettes, computer games, or radio," they report.

There are several possible ways by which media exposure could boost the risk of depression, the researchers say. The time spent watching TV or using other electronic media may replace time spent socializing, participating in sports or engaging in intellectual activities – all of which may protect against depression.

Watching TV at night may disrupt sleep, which is important for normal brain and emotional development. In addition, messages transmitted through the media may reinforce aggression and other risky behaviors, interfere with identity development or inspire fear and anxiety, the researchers note.

This study, they conclude, “breaks new ground in linking media use in adolescence to the development of depressive symptoms in young adulthood.”

SOURCE: Archives of General Psychiatry, February 2009.

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### **Lots of TV and Web harms kids' health**

Tue Dec 2, 2008 6:48am EST

(Links have been added in some of the news stories below by Frank Baker which will take the reader to the referenced report).

By Will Dunham

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Spending a lot of time watching TV, playing video games and surfing the Web makes children more prone to a range of health problems including obesity and smoking, U.S. researchers said on Tuesday.

U.S. National Institutes of Health, Yale University and the California Pacific Medical Center experts analyzed 173 studies done since 1980 in one of the most comprehensive assessments to date on how exposure to media sources impacts the physical health of children and adolescents.

The studies, most conducted in the United States, largely focused on television, but some looked at video games, films, music, and computer and Internet use. Three quarters of them found that increased media

viewing was associated with negative health outcomes.

The studies offered strong evidence that children who get more media exposure are more likely to become obese, start smoking and begin earlier sexual activity than those who spend less time in front of a screen, the researchers said.

Studies also indicated more media exposure also was linked to drug and alcohol use and poorer school performance, while the evidence was less clear about an association with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, they added.

"I think we were pretty surprised by how overwhelming the number of studies was that showed this negative health impact," NIH bioethicist Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, one of the researchers in [the report](#) released by the advocacy group Common Sense Media, said in a telephone interview.

"The fact that it was probably more a matter of quantity than actual content is also a concern. We have a media-saturated life right now in the 21st century. And reducing the number of hours of exposure is going to be a big issue."

Experts for decades have worried about the impact on young viewers of the violence and sexual content in some TV programs, movies and video games. Another issue is that kids are spending time sitting on a couch watching TV or playing computer games when they could be running around outside.

One study cited in the report found that children who spent more than eight hours watching TV per week at age 3 were more likely to be obese at 7. And research shows that many U.S. children, even toddlers, watch far more.

Dr. Cary Gross of Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, another of the researchers, said TV and other media content can have a profound impact on children's attitudes and beliefs, most notably among teens.

He cited a U.S. study by the RAND research organization published in November that showed that adolescents who watched more programming with

sexual themes had a higher risk of becoming pregnant or causing a pregnancy.

Thirteen of 14 studies that evaluated sexual behavior found an association between media exposure and earlier initiation of sexual behavior, the researchers said.

(Editing by Maggie Fox and Philip Barbara)

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## Media Bombardment Is Linked To Ill Effects During Childhood



By [Donna St. George](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer

Tuesday, December 2, 2008; Page C07

In a detailed look at nearly 30 years of research on how television, music, movies and other media affect the lives of children and adolescents, a new [study](#) released today found an array of negative health effects linked to greater use.

The report found strong connections between media exposure and problems of childhood obesity and tobacco use. Nearly as strong was the link to early sexual behavior. Researchers from the National Institutes of Health and Yale University said they were surprised that so many studies pointed in the same direction. In all, 173 research efforts, going back to 1980, were analyzed, rated and brought together in what the researchers said was the first comprehensive view of the topic. About 80 percent of the studies showed a link between a negative health outcome and media hours or content.

"We need to factor that in as we consider our social policies and as parents think about how they raise their kids," said lead researcher Ezekiel J. Emanuel, director of the Department of Bioethics at the National Institutes of Health, which took on the project with the nonprofit organization Common Sense Media. "We tend not to think of this as a health issue, and it is a health issue."

The average modern child spends nearly 45 hours a week with television, movies, magazines, music, the Internet, cellphones and video games, the

study reported. By comparison, children spend 17 hours a week with their parents on average and 30 hours a week in school, the study said.

"Our kids are sponges, and we really need to remember they learn from their environment," said coauthor Cary P. Gross, professor at Yale School of Medicine. He said researchers found it notable how much content mattered; it was not only the sheer number of hours of screen time. Children "pick up character traits and behaviors" from those they watch or hear, he said.

Marcella Nunez-Smith, a lead author and also a professor at the Yale School of Medicine, described the project as a "mammoth" undertaking that spanned more than 18 months.

In probing childhood obesity, for example, researchers found 73 studies over the past three decades, with 86 percent showing a negative association with media exposure. The studies most central to the analysis were large high-quality efforts and controlled for other factors.

Researchers are not interested in any sort of censorship, Nunez-Smith said, but rather an increased awareness among parents, teachers and society at large. "It really is a wake-up call," she said.

The study did not touch on issues of violence and media, which researchers said was systematically reviewed by others. Researchers also excluded analysis of advertising or marketing. Most studies used in the analysis, as it turned out, focused on movies, music and television. Researchers said a big gap was the lack of research on the effects of the Internet, cellphones, social-networking sites and video games.

In their study, they rated as above average evidence to support the link between media exposure and drug use, alcohol use and low academic achievement. Evidence was weaker for the association with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. "It does not mean the link is not there, but the research evidence has not gotten there yet," Gross said.

The report's authors hope it will be taken to heart by parents, as well as educators, pediatricians and policymakers. They came up with suggestions for each group, and James P. Steyer, chief executive of

Common Sense Media, suggested that parents get involved in what their children see, hear and play – and for how long.

"It's as important as going to their parent-teacher conferences or going over their report cards," Steyer said. "You have to know what Facebook is, and YouTube and MySpace and Twitter are, even though you grew up with 'Gilligan's Island' and 'All in the Family.' "

The new report was a systematic review of every study since 1980 that met set scientific criteria and examined media effects on obesity, tobacco, drug and alcohol use, sexual behavior, low academic achievement and ADHD.

Adam Thierer, a senior fellow at the market-oriented think tank Progress and Freedom Foundation, said it is important to recognize that "correlation does not equal causation" in research studies. He said he looked forward to reading the studies that the report is based on and was glad that there was no call for regulation.

Those involved in the project said they were not opposed to children using media and noted that several studies reached positive conclusions, including one for adolescents who used the Internet more frequently.

The issue, said Steyer, is: "How do we make this the most positive experience it can be? How do we get the most educational value . . . and how do we limit the negative effects?"

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**Report: Mass media harms kids**

SET LIMITS

Experts offer these tips to protect children:

Limit screen time to one to two hours a day.

Consider ditching cable or TV altogether.

• Learn about new media, such as text-messaging or social-networking websites, and how your children are using them.

• Don't rely on the ratings for video games.

Instead, watch or play the games yourself.

• Don't allow children to have computers, TVs or other media in their bedrooms.

• Set limits on how a child may use a new purchase, such as an iPod, from the beginning.

*Sources: Emanuel Ezekiel, National Institutes of Health; Michael Brody, University of Maryland; Jane Brown, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; Victor Strasburger, University of New Mexico School of Medicine*



- [Digg](#)
- [Newsvine](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [What's this?](#)

By [Liz Szabo](#), USA TODAY

Parents and policymakers need to take action to protect children from being harmed by TV, the Internet and other types of media, a report says. Researchers have done individual studies for years to learn how media affect children. A review released today, which analyzed 173 of the strongest papers over 28 years, finds that 80% agree that heavy media exposure increases the risk of harm, including obesity, smoking, sex, drug and alcohol use, attention problems and poor grades.

Some of the links are particularly strong. For example, 93% of studies found that children with greater media exposure have sex earlier. Authors say the soundest studies are those linking media use with obesity, while the evidence linking media exposure to hyperactivity is weaker.

The study provides overwhelming evidence of the importance of limiting children's use of media and teaching them to critically evaluate the ever-growing volume of text, images and sounds with which they are bombarded, says co-author Ezekiel Emanuel of the National Institutes of Health. He says the report also urges Hollywood and technology makers to create entertainment that is less toxic and more family-friendly.

"The idea that this is having a really measurable adverse impact on health makes it important to take this seriously," Emanuel says. "Every year, we have 4 million new kids. How long are we going to wait?"

The average child spends nearly 45 hours a week immersed in media – almost three times the amount of time they spend with their parents, according to the report, commissioned by Commonsense Media, a non-partisan watchdog group. In comparison, children spend an average of 30 hours in school.

Keeping an eye on children's media use is tougher today, says Jane Brown, a journalism and mass communication professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill who was not involved in the report. In the past, families often watched TV together, and parents could easily change the channel or voice their disapproval. Today's technology often isolates children, who may tune out their families to concentrate on a cellphone screen only they can see.

Even pediatricians struggle to stay connected to their children. Victor Strasburger, a pediatrics professor at the University of New Mexico who was not involved in the study, says he took away his 15-year-old daughter's phone when he caught her text-messaging at Thanksgiving dinner.

Michael Brody, a child psychiatrist at the University of Maryland who also was not involved in the study, says the country needs to address the onslaught of negatives images. He says children today have greater exposure to online pornography and Internet "hate sites" that attack minorities and gays.

The study's authors say policymakers also need to establish "clear limits" on marketing products such as junk food to children.

Ignoring these problems, Brody says, will only lead to even higher rates of childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, violence and teen pregnancy.

"At some point," Brody says, "we are all going to be paying for this."

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December 2, 2008

### **Report Ties Children's Use of Media to Their Health**

By BRIAN STELTER/New York Times

The National Institutes of Health and a nonprofit advocacy group, Common Sense Media, have another reason for President-elect Barack Obama to keep urging parents to "turn off the TV." In what researchers call the first [report](#) of its kind, a review of 173 studies about the effects of media consumption on children asserts that a strong correlation exists between greater exposure and adverse health outcomes.

"Coach potato does, unfortunately, sum it up pretty well," said Ezekiel J. Emanuel, chairman of the bioethics department at the institutes' clinical center, one of the study's five reviewers.

The report should compel lawmakers to underwrite media education efforts and public service advertising campaigns and should motivate the entertainment industry to be more "responsible and responsive," said Jim Steyer, the chief executive of Common Sense Media, which helped to finance the study.

"The research is clear that exposure to media has a variety of negative health impacts on children and teens," he said.

Dr. Emanuel, Mr. Steyer and others plan to brief Washington policy makers on the study on Tuesday. Joined by researchers at Yale University and California Pacific Medical Center, Dr. Emanuel's team analyzed almost 1,800 studies conducted since 1980 and identified 173 that met the criteria the researchers set.

In a clear majority of those studies more time with television, films, video games, magazines, music and the Internet was linked to rises in childhood obesity, tobacco use and sexual behavior. A majority also showed strong correlations – what the researchers deemed "statistically significant associations" – with drug and alcohol use and low academic achievement.

The evidence was somewhat less indicative of a relationship between media exposure and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, the seventh health outcome that was studied.

Dr. Emanuel, whose brother, Rahm, is the president-elect's chief of staff, said he was surprised by how lopsided the findings were. "We found very few studies that had any positive association" for children's health, he said.

Researchers sought to look at the health effects of a wide array of media and distill 30 years of research into a simple message. "The average parent doesn't understand that if you plop your kids down in front of the TV or the computer for five hours a day, it can change their brain

development, it can make them fat, and it can lead them to get involved in risky sexual activity at a young age," Mr. Steyer said.

Acknowledging that socioeconomic status and other factors can affect children's health, Dr. Emanuel said the researchers chose studies that controlled for outside variables and ranked the strength of evidence accordingly.

Mr. Steyer said he was surprised to find an absence of research into the impact of new technologies. "Media has evolved at a dizzying pace, but there's almost no research about Facebook, MySpace, cellphones, et cetera," he said.

His organization, which was founded in 2003 and provides family-oriented reviews and ratings of Web sites, television shows and video games, intends to push for more research into the media's effects on children and the setting of limits on advertising to children.

Mr. Obama has shown interest in the subject, telling parents to "turn off the television set and put the video games away" in speeches and running a commercial during the campaign, "Turn It Off," that focused on education.

While Dr. Emanuel wouldn't say if the study was a subject at Thanksgiving dinner with his brother, he said that more research into media's effects on children's health was necessary.

"We have to be concerned about what's on TV, but we also have to be concerned about how much of the day kids are actually interacting with TV and other media," he said.

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#### **Study: Media Responsible For Childhood Health, Safety Risks**

**Review was undertaken with the backing of Common Sense and the National Institutes of Health**

By John Eggerton – Broadcasting & Cable, 12/2/2008 6:00:00 AM

A new [“study of studies”](#) lays partial blame for a number of childhood health and safety risks at the doorstep of the media, all kinds of media, and recommends policymakers restrict ads, promote media education, among other steps.

And that recommendation comes from a group of executives that includes a possible future FCC chairman or communications policy czar.

The overwhelming majority of studies show that media exposure is bad for kids’ health, from making them fatter to encouraging drug and alcohol and tobacco use, to hurting their grades. That is according to a review of 173 studies conducted since 1980 on the impact of media on children’s health and development.

The review was undertaken with the backing of kids activist group Common Sense and the National Institutes of Health. It looked at what Common Sense characterized as “the best” studies, including evaluating them against each other for the relative strength of the findings.

One of Common Sense’s advisory board members is Julius Genachowski, a college friend and advisor to Barack Obama who is currently helping shape the administration’s approach to communications policy as a member of its tech transition team.

The study review was necessary, says Common sense, because kids spend 45 hours a week with media, while only 30 hours in school and 17 hours with their parents. Media was defined as movies, the Internet, video and computer games, magazines and music, though advertising, journalism, and public service announcements were excluded.

The exclusion of advertising seemed curious since one of the conclusions from the study was to restrict advertising.

The review concluded that since 1980, 80% of the 173 studies “concluded that increased media exposure was associated with a negative health outcome,” with the greatest impact coming on childhood obesity, tobacco use and sexual behavior. In addition to those three, the studies looked at drug use, alcohol use, low academic achievement, and attention

deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Only one study came up with a correlation between exposure to specific media and a positive outcome—for certain Web pages and better school performance—although seven studies found a correlation between media quantity and better health.

The study panel recommends that parents take a more active role in limiting, balancing and talking about media; that policymakers limit the ads, fund media literacy and fund more research; that the media better police their content, better educate families about it, encourage kids to limit their consumption, and create better educational media, and that schools adopt a media literacy curriculum that includes Internet safety.

The “expert panel” review of the studies (by the Yale University School of Medicine, NIH and the California Pacific Medical Center) comes as Democrats prepare to take over the White House as well as strengthened majorities in both houses of Congress.

This study and other recently-issued studies linking media and behavior could provide ammunition for newly empowered Democrats. That includes Jay Rockefeller, a strong critic of the media’s impact on kids, who is taking over the Senate Commerce Committee; and Ed Markey (D-MA), a critic of snack food marketing to kids. Markey is already chairman of the powerful House Telecommunications Subcommittee, but could become even more powerful since new Energy & Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA) is expected to defer more communications issues to Markey and focus more on energy issues.

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#### **Media exposure of children linked to obesity, tobacco use: study**

December 2, 2008

WASHINGTON (AFP) – Greater exposure of children and teenagers to television, music, movies and other media is linked to

obesity, tobacco use and other negative health issues, according to a [study](#) published on Tuesday.

"The results clearly show that there is a strong correlation between media exposure and long-term negative health effects to children," said Ezekiel Emanuel of the National Institutes of Health, lead researcher on the study.

The study, "Media and Child and Adolescent Health: A Systematic Review," was done by the Yale University School of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, and California Pacific Medical Center and published by Common Sense Media.

It looked at the best studies on media and health from the last 28 years, a total of 173 in all, and found that 80 percent of them showed that greater media exposure led to negative health effects in children and adolescents.

The study examined media exposure and seven health outcomes: tobacco use, early sexual behavior, childhood obesity, attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity, low academic performance, drug use and alcohol use.

"This review is the first ever comprehensive evaluation of the many ways that media impacts children's physical health," said Emanuel, whose brother, Rahm Emanuel, is chief of staff to president-elect Barack Obama.

The strongest link was found between media and obesity with 86 percent of 73 studies finding a strong relationship between increased screen time and obesity.

Eight-eight percent of 24 studies examining media and tobacco use found a statistically significant relationship between increased media exposure and an increase in smoking at an early age.

Of eight studies on media and drug use, 75 percent found a statistically significant relationship between media exposure and drug use while 80 percent of 10 studies reported a statistically significant association between media exposure and early alcohol use.

Sixty-five percent of 31 studies evaluated reported a statistically

significant association between increased media exposure and poor academic outcomes such as low standardized test scores or grades.

Sixty-two percent of 26 studies which analyzed the number of hours spent watching television reported a significant relationship between greater media exposure and low academic achievement.

On a positive note, one study of Internet use did find that increased access to certain types of websites was associated with better school performance.

Thirteen of 14 studies (93 percent) found a statistically significant association between media exposure and early sexual behavior.

As for attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity, nine of 13 studies (69 percent) found an association between media exposure and increased attention problems.

According to the study, the average child or adolescent spends nearly 45 hours per week with media, compared with 17 hours with parents and 30 hours in school.

The study's authors said most of the quality studies available focused on television, movies and music and said future research should look at the impact of the Internet, video games and cellphones.

"This study provides an important jumping-off point for future research that should explore both the effects of traditional media content and that of digital media – such as video games, the Internet, and cellphones – which kids are using today with more frequency," said Emanuel.

The authors of the study recommended that parents place limits on the amount of media their children consume, ensure they watch age-appropriate programs and encourage them to spend more time playing outside.

"Parents and educators must consider the effects of media when they're trying to address issues with their child's health," said James Steyer, chief executive and founder of Common Sense Media.

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## Media Usage and Adolescent Health, a Metastudy

December 3, 2008  
<http://peterhayward.wordpress.com/2008/12/03/media-usage-and-adolescent-health-a-metastudy/>

Media Usage and Adolescent Health, a Metastudy“Media are increasingly pervasive in the lives of children and adolescents # the average kid today spends nearly 45 hours per week with media, compared with 17 hours with parents and 30 hours in school. However, until now there has been very little comprehensive analysis of the different research tracking the impact of media on children’s health.”

Thus begins the [executive summary](#) of a metatstudy on the relationship between use of media and adolescent health. The research results were published December 2nd by the advocacy group [Common Sense Media](#).

The study was undertaken by the National Institutes of Health, the Yale University School of Medicine, and the California Pacific Medical Center, and analyzed the “best [research] studies” undertaken since 1980 on this topic. One hundred seventy three “best studies” were identified.

Of specific interest was the impact of increased media usage on:

- obesity
- tobacco use
- drug use
- alcohol use
- low academic achievement
- sexual behavior
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Although the researchers attempted to assess studies related to the usage of all media (the internet, magazines, movies, music, television, and video games), the researchers found that “most of the quality studies” investigated only the impact on adolescent health of movies, television and music.

Of the “best studies,” 127 evaluated the relationship between the hours adolescents spent on media usage and health outcome. Seventy five percent of these 127 studies demonstrated an increase number of hours were associated with a “negative health outcome” and 20% showed no statistically significant relationship. Seven studies (6%) showed a positive relationship between media usage and some measure health outcome.

In the findings below, statistically significant means the results were unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Obesity: increased media usage was associated with increased incidence of obesity and increased weight gain over time. (Of 73 studies, 63 (86%) showed this association as statically significant.) A single longitudinal study begun with 5,493 three year old children found that children watching more than 8 hours of television “were significantly more likely to be obese at age seven.”

Tobacco usage: increased media usage was associated with increased smoking, which was defined as ““children trying smoking, or beginning to smoke at an earlier age.” (Of 24 studies, 21 (88%) showed this association as statically significant.)

Drug Usage: increased media usage was associated with increased drug usage, defined as “past or current use of specific recreational drugs including cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamines, and ecstasy.” (Of 8 studies, 6 (75%) showed this association as statically significant.)

Alcohol Usage: increased media usage was associated with increased alcohol usage. (Of 10 studies, 8 (80%) showed this association as statically significant.)

Low academic achievement: increased media usage was shown to have a negative impact on academic achievement “measured through standardized test scores or school grades.” (Of 31 studies, 20 (65%) showed this association as statically significant.)

Sexual behavior: increased media usage was associated with “a more rapid progression of initiation of sexual behavior.’ (Of the 14 studies, 13

(93%) showed this association as statically significant.)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): increased media usage was associated with “increased attention problems.” (Of the 13 studies, 9 studies (69%) showed this association as statically significant.)

Too often, a single research study can fall victim to the “umbrella/rain” correlation fallacy. Technically known as “Post hoc ergo propter hoc” or Post hoc thinking, it can be reduced to “X happened, Y happened, therefore X caused Y to happen.”

The fallacy lies in the assumed directionality. On days that it rains, we see many people with umbrellas. Did the increased number of people with umbrellas cause the rain to fall, or did the impending rain cause people to carry umbrellas? Does increased media usage lead to obesity, or are obese people more likely to watch more television?

By rigorous analysis of a large number of “best studies,” a metastudy can avoid the correlation or Post Hoc fallacy.

Of the advantages of a metastudy, one is that it pulls together all printed research on a subject, in contrast to the single studies which often make the news.

In gathering the research studies for a quality metastudy, typically a panel independent of the reviewers ranks each of the collected studies as to quality of research methodology and quantity of subjects in each study. A quality metastudy can control for study variation and can utilize statistical methods such as regression techniques which may not be appropriate in small N studies.

Metastudies are not without their disadvantages.

Unless well defined and unless the input is independently evaluated and controlled, a metastudy can have the disadvantage of investigator bias or weak study bias.

A further disadvantage of metastudies of published research is that unpublished results are ignored, thus skewing the results (Studies which result in a null (no) relationship between two variables are seldom

published. Thus if there are 1,000 studies of media and health outcomes which find no relationship, these are “lost” as the researchers collect the studies which show a relationship.)