



Too much TV, video games can threaten attention span

Posted 7/10/2010 3:00 PM

By Kathleen Doheny, HealthDay

Too much time spent watching television and playing video games can double the risk of attention problems in children and young adults, new research finds.

The study is the latest of many to point out the ill effects of excessive screen time, whether at the computer or the television.

Researcher Edward Swing, a graduate student at Iowa State University, compared participants who watched TV or played video games less than two hours a day — the recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics for children aged 2 and older — to those who watched more.

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"Those who exceeded the AAP recommendation were about 1.6 times to 2.2 times more likely to have greater than average attention problems," he said.

The middle-schoolers he studied were a little less likely than the college students to have attention problems with excess TV and video game participation.

The study is published in the July issue of *Pediatrics*

Swing and his colleagues looked at two age groups. They assessed more than 1,300 children in the third, fourth and fifth grades over a 13-month time period. They also looked at 210 college students for a one-time evaluation.

"The children were reporting their TV and video game use and the parents were also reporting TV and video game use," Swing said. "The teachers were reporting attention problems," he said of the middle

school students.

Teachers reported if children had problems staying on task, paying attention, if they interrupted other children's work, or showed problems in other areas that reflected trouble with attention.

College students did self-reports on their attention problems.

Middle school students spent an average of 4.26 hours a day watching TV or playing video games, the team found, while older students spent 4.82 hours daily.

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