

Time Spent Watching TV May Cause Obesity In Kids

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Does your child hit the couch and television remote "grabbing some snacks and something to drink" when they get home after school each day. It is more common than you may imagine and this is contributing to high levels of obesity in our country.

When GKA asked some Nelson school children we got the standard reply of "when I am lying or sitting on the couch I multitask, I eat some food and i watch TV". The average NZ child in New Zealand watches TV for about three hours a day. But when they get bored they head outside and play the some sport. Is this message getting through to our parents? Get Kids Active believes not enough is being done to help NZ parents become aware of this massive issue. Shouldn't children want to come home and go out and play with friends first? I would love to hear some feedback from parents on this issue, please write your comments in our chat section. New Zealand researchers say that watching TV makes children more likely to become overweight. TV time, they contend, is a strong predictor of whether someone will be overweight. Cutting back on TV "would be an important first step in attempts to tackle the current epidemic of childhood obesity," lead researcher Bob Hancox said. The findings come from a long-term study of nearly 1,000 children in the southern city of Dunedin by Otago University Medical School "research begun when the children were born in 1972. The children's viewing habits and body-mass index "a height and weight formula" were studied every two years between the ages of 5 and 15. The association between their BMI at each age and the number of hours they watched TV each day was then analysed. After adjusting the research for family history and socio-economic status, the study with co-author Richie Poulton found that the time spent watching TV "is a significant predictor of body-mass index and being overweight. "In fact, "TV viewing is more strongly associated with an increased BMI than diet or activity levels have been reported to be," Hancox said in a statement. Writing in the September issue of the "International Journal of Obesity," the researchers said that while the children in the study appeared to have grown up before the global epidemic of childhood obesity reached New Zealand, the advantage was short-lived. By age 26, 41 percent were either overweight or obese, "an outcome that was significantly related to the amount of television they watched during childhood," they wrote. The authors also said there appears to be a stronger correlation between BMI and TV-watching in girls, particularly during adolescence, but they are not sure why that is the case. Diabetics specialist Dr. Robyn Toomath, who was not involved in the research, said TV-watching seemed to correlate with obesity "over and above genetics and over and above poverty." Toomath is a specialist at Wellington's Capital and Coast Hospital and spokeswoman for the medical group, Fight the Obesity Epidemic. "The food trigger" rather than lying on the couch, she said, that is the key cause of obesity among child TV viewers. "What's more, other studies have shown the food they eat correlates with the food that's being advertised... the high-sugar, high-salt, high-fat foods which are typically shown during ... the hours when kids watch," Toomath said. At Wellington's St. Anne's junior school, where BMI checks showed 29 percent of kids were overweight, principal Doreen O'Sullivan has recruited parents, kids, teachers and the governing board to fight the flab. At school now, water is the only drink, bowls of cut fruit are available in every classroom and only healthy lunches are served at the school canteen. But controls on home TV use pose a problem. Many low-income parents work nights when kids are watching TV, said O'Sullivan. "The only way we can respond is to try ... and help parents find some alternatives." To find out more information on how to get your kids active, please check out our Hot Products section or email craig@getkidsactive.com Please send us healthy recipes and pictures of your kids getting active to post on our site, we are always seeking more cool stuff so send it in and you will enter the draw for prizes :)