**WATCHING TV THREE HOURS A DAY LINKED TO TYPE 2 DIABETES IN CHILDREN**

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One in five children asked in study say they spend more than three hours in front of a screen

Children who spend more than three hours a day in front of the TV or a computer may be at greater risk of developing type 2 [diabetes](http://www.independent.co.uk/topic/Diabetes).

Increased levels of body fat and insulin resistance in children were linked to regular extended periods of screen time in a new study published in the journal [*Archives of Disease in Childhood*](http://adc.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/archdischild-2016-312016).

Diabetes risk factors including blood fat and glucose levels, blood pressure and resistance to [insulin](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/sir-frederick-banting-five-facts-man-co-discovered-insulin-google-doodle-charles-best-a7415896.html) were measured in 4,495 children aged nine and ten from primary schools in London, Birmingham and Leicester.

Children who said they spent the most time watching TV or using electronic devices each day were found to be more likely to exhibit physical risk factors for diabetes.

“Our findings suggest that reducing screen time may be beneficial in reducing type 2 diabetes risk factors, in both boys and girls and in different ethnic groups from an early age,” wrote the researchers from [St George’s, University of London](http://www.independent.co.uk/student/into-university/az-uni-colleges/st-georges-university-of-london-754718.html).

The scientists said their findings were of “considerable potential public health interest” but emphasised further research was needed to prove the link between diabetes risk and screen time.

“This is particularly relevant, given rising levels of type 2 diabetes, the early emergence of type 2 diabetes risk, and recent trends suggesting that screen time related activities are increasing in childhood and may pattern screen-related behaviours in later life,” they said.

Previous research has suggested a link between time spent on screens and heightened type 2 diabetes risk in adults, but little is yet known about the possible association in children.

The overall number of prescriptions given to treat type 2 diabetes, a disease associated with obesity and lifestyle, has [risen by nearly 35 per cent](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/diabetes-obesity-type-2-prescriptions-england-a7354046.html) in four years, according to Government figures.

Based on current trends, the number of people with the disease is said to be on track to reach five million by 2020, five years earlier than previously thought.

Of the children who took part in the study between 2004 and 2007 and for whom complete data were held, 18 per cent – around one in five – said they spent more than three hours on screens every day.

Boys were more likely than girls to spend lots of time watching TV or using electronic devices, with 22 per cent of boys saying they spent three or more hours on screens a day, compared to 14 per cent of girls.

Children of African-Caribbean origin were also more likely to spend more than three hours a day in front of a screen, with 23 per cent saying they did in comparison to 16 per cent of European and 16 per cent of South Asian children.

The researchers said the link between diabetes risk factors and screen time was seen even when potentially influential factors such as household income, family background, physical activity levels and puberty stage were taken into account.