**COUCH POTATO KIDS**

**Children slip into inactivity as young as seven due to smartphones and television**

By Shaun Wooller

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Researchers find both sexes stop being as active at primary school - not during adolescence as it was previously presumed

**KIDS start to become couch potatoes from as young a seven, a study found.**

It was previously thought children were active until adolescence, when exercise fell sharply.

This was particularly believed to be the case among girls.

But researchers found both sexes stop moving while still at primary school.

Growing use of smartphones, computers and TVs are thought to be to blame.

Scientists from the University of Strathclyde tracked 400 children for eight years, measuring the amount they moved at the age of 7, 9, 12 and 15.

The amount of physical activity fell from the age of 7 onwards, with declines no steeper during adolescence than in earlier childhood.

Just 19 per cent of boys engaged in stable levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity throughout the study.  
No girls remained that active for the duration.

Study leader Mohammed Farooq said: “There was no evidence that physical activity decline began at adolescence, or that adolescent declines in physical activity were substantially greater than the declines during childhood, or greater in girls than boys.

“Future policy and research efforts to promote physical activity should begin well before adolescence, and should include both boys and girls.”

Government guidelines say children aged 5 to 18 should do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

This should range from moderate activity, such as cycling and playground activities, to vigorous activity, such as running and tennis.

On three days a week, these activities should involve exercises for strong muscles, such as push-ups, and exercises for strong bones, such as jumping and running.

Officials also advise children to reduce the time they spend sitting watching TV, playing computer games and travelling by car when they could walk or cycle instead.

The findings are published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.