

(Agencies)

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Toddlers who watch too much TV may struggle in school later, with measurably lower scores in math, and they may get bullied more than other children, Canadian and U.S. researchers reported on Monday.

Less surprisingly, children who watched more TV at age 2 weighed more by the time they were 10 and ate more snacks and soft drinks, the researchers reported in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.

"The results support previous suggestions that early childhood television exposure undermines attention," wrote Linda Pagani of the University of Montreal and colleagues at Bowling Green University in Kentucky and the University of Michigan.

They said children who spend more time watching TV and less time playing with other kids may lose valuable chances to learn social skills.

The researchers started with more than 2,000 children taking part in a larger study. Their parents reported how much TV the children watched at 2-1/2 and later at 4-1/2 year old.

The checked with the children's teachers and doctors when the subjects were 10.

Every additional weekly hour of television at 29 months corresponded to a 7 percent drop in classroom attention and a 6 percent drop in math skills, the researchers found.

An hour more TV a week as a toddler meant a child was 10 percent more likely to be bullied, exercised 13 percent less, weighed 5 percent more and ate 10 percent more snacks, they found.

"Despite clear, age-specific recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics that discourage any screen media exposure during infancy and less than two hours per day beyond 2 years of age, parents show poor factual knowledge and awareness of such existing guidelines," the researchers wrote.

In their group, most of the children watched no more TV than this recommended amount but 11 percent watched more, they said

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