Screen-time, obesity, ageing and disability: findings from 91 266 participants in the 45 and Up Study

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Abstract

Background: To assess the relationship between children’s and sedentary behaviours, such as watching television or using a computer (screen-time), and adverse health outcomes (obesity, disability). We describe how this relationship varies between population subgroups.

Design: Cross-sectional analysis of relationships between obesity (BMI > 25 kg\(^2\)) and screen-time, adjusted for age, sex, income and education and compared according to a range of personal characteristics.

Setting: New South Wales, Australia.

Subsample: A total of 91 266 men and women aged 45 years and above from the general population of New South Wales in 1986–2007 and providing self-reported information on height and weight and other factors.

Results: Obesity prevalence was 31.3%. Compared to individuals aged 70+ years of age, people aged 45–69 years of age had higher screen-time, both adjusted and unadjusted, both for total screen-time and for physical activity. The increase in obesity with screen-time was greater within categories of smaller screen-time, with the exception of the highest screen-time, where the increase in obesity occurred between 3.5 and 4.5 hours. The increase in obesity with screen-time was greater within categories of smaller screen-time, with the exception of the highest screen-time, where the increase in obesity occurred between 3.5 and 4.5 hours.

Conclusions: Obesity increases with increasing screen-time, independent of purposeful physical activity. This was observed in all population groups examined, although it is attenuated in full-time workers and disabled individuals.

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