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Study: Teens spending seven hours a day in front of TVs, computers

Ontario students are spending more time in front of screens than ever before, according to a recent CAMH study. In addition, more of them are reporting poor health and less daily activity as compared to the past. The study, conducted between November 2008 and June 2009, involved students from grade 7 - 12 across Ontario. 9.7% of Ontario students spend more than 7 hours in front of a TV or a computer. Of those, 11.4% are male and 7.8% are female.

No doubt your kids are not spending that much time. But how much time are they spending?

Let's look at why this is an important conversation, beyond the mental health issues:

Fitness and injury:

Kids and teens are growing; their bodies are constantly shifting changing as they come into their adult physiology. Healthy habits are incredibly important at this stage.

Posture:

How is your teen sitting? Are they slumped down, are they hunched over, do they remain in one position for too long? Too many teens are they doing their homework on a laptop on their bed, or sitting in chairs with insufficient support. Proper chair, desk and keyboard set up is crucial for preventing the slumped postures that contribute to injury down the road.

Repetitive Motions:

If your kids are using a laptop or a keyboard and mouse - are their wrists too high? Do they have a chair that encourages sitting up straight and proper alignment in the shoulders and arms?

Headaches, back and neck pain, repetitive strain injuries and digestive disorders are often the result of even a few hours of TV or computer time, especially in sub-optimum conditions. Remember that the way kids sit for long periods is habit-forming.

We invite you to bring your teen into our clinic for a consultation. We will evaluate their posture, where and when computers and TVs are used and for how long, and we will suggest sets of exercises, changes to patterns and healthy practices for the immediate future. Remember that your teen will be spending more and more time studying for exams and doing homework.

According to a study published in May 2010 in the journal Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, exercise does not counteract the negative effects of sitting for hours. Even for adults who exercise regularly, hours of sitting can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. In animal studies, inactivity led to unhealthy cellular changes. [The New York Times Magazine July 18, 2010].

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