

Babies as young as 6 months using mobile media

25 April 2015

More than one-third of babies are tapping on smartphones and tablets even before they learn to walk or talk, and by 1 year of age, one in seven toddlers is using devices for at least an hour a day, according to a study to be presented Saturday, April 25 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in San Diego.

The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages the use of entertainment [media](#) such as televisions, computers, smartphones and tablets by children under age 2. Little is known, however, when youngsters actually start using mobile devices.

Researchers developed a 20-item survey to find out when [young children](#) are first exposed to [mobile media](#) and how they use devices. The questionnaire was adapted from the "Zero to Eight" Common Sense Media national survey on media use in children.

Parents of children ages 6 months to 4 years old who were at a hospital-based pediatric clinic that serves a low-income, minority community were recruited to fill out the survey. Participants were asked about what types of media devices they have in their household, children's age at initial exposure to mobile media, frequency of use, types of activities and if their pediatrician had discussed media use with them.

Results from 370 parents showed that 74 percent were African-American, 14 percent were Hispanic and 13 percent had less than a [high school education](#). Media devices were ubiquitous, with 97 percent having TVs, 83 percent having tablets, 77 percent having smartphones and 59 percent having Internet access.

Children younger than 1 year of age were exposed to media devices in surprisingly large numbers: 52 percent had watched TV shows, 36 percent had touched or scrolled a screen, 24 percent had

called someone, 15 percent used apps and 12 percent played video games.

By 2 years of age, most children were using mobile devices.

Lead author Hilda Kabali, MD, a third-year resident in the Pediatrics Department at Einstein Healthcare Network, said the results surprised her.

"We didn't expect children were using the devices from the age of 6 months," she said. "Some children were on the screen for as long as 30 minutes."

Results also showed 73 percent of parents let their [children](#) play with [mobile devices](#) while doing household chores, 60 percent while running errands, 65 percent to calm a child and 29 percent to put a child to sleep.

Time spent on devices increased with [age](#), with 26 percent of 2-year-olds and 38 percent of 4-year-olds using devices for at least an hour a day.

Finally, only 30 percent of parents said their child's pediatrician had discussed media use with them.

Dr. Kabali will present "First Exposure and Use of Mobile Media in Young Children" from 8:30-8:45 a.m. PT Saturday, April 25. To view the study abstract, go to

http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view.php?nu=PAS15L1_1165.3

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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