

The amount of time children and adolescents spend watching screens influences their eating habits

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Researchers Julia Wärnberg and Napoleón Pérez Farinós, main authors of this study, at a laboratory of the UMA Faculty of Science. Credit: University of Malaga

The time children and adolescents spend on screen time entertainment –computers, mobile phones, television and video games– adversely affects their eating habits. This is the main conclusion drawn from a research carried out by EpiPHAAN (Epidemiology, Physical Activity, Accelerometry and Nutrition) research group of the University of Malaga, which further establishes that parents' education level is also associated with the adherence to the Mediterranean diet.

This research was conducted within the PASOS Study –Physical Activity, Sedentarism, lifestyles and Obesity in Spanish youth– of Gasol Foundation, which analyzed more than 3800 children and adolescents, aged eight to 16, from 245 schools from all over Spain, in order to assess the level of physical activity, sedentarism, lifestyles and obesity in Spanish youth and their families.

"The Mediterranean diet is one of the most

complete, balanced and healthy diets, as it prevents obesity and represents a life assurance against cardiovascular diseases," explains Julia Wärnberg, researcher of the University of Malaga, Nutrition expert, and main author of this study, which has been published in Journal of Clinical Medicine.

This study evidences that in children and adolescents a greater amount of [screen time](#) is associated with a lower consumption of fruit, vegetables, legumes, fish and nuts –the foundations of the Mediterranean diet– and a greater consumption of sweets, candies and fast food.

According to the experts, it is important for children and adolescents to follow the Mediterranean [diet](#) to maintain good [eating habits](#), reduce the probability of childhood and [adolescent](#) obesity and enhance their health in adulthood. "It is essential to promote this dietary pattern, as well as its related lifestyle habits, such as [physical activity](#) and reduced sedentary behavior," remarks the researcher of the UMA.

Likewise, the scientists evidenced that low parent education level influences the adoption of worse lifestyles among children and adolescents, including poor diets, as well as little knowledge of nutrition and awareness about nutritional aspects.

"Screen Time and Parents' Education Level Are Associated with Poor Adherence to the Mediterranean Diet in Spanish Children and Adolescents: The PASOS Study' was conducted by 28 researchers of PASOS from more than ten R&D&I groups. The scientists of the UMA Javier Barón, Juan Carlos Benavente and Napoleón Pérez Farinós are other members of EpiPHAAN who authored this study.

More information: Julia Wärnberg et al. Screen Time and Parents' Education Level Are Associated with Poor Adherence to the Mediterranean Diet in Spanish Children and Adolescents: The PASOS Study, *Journal of Clinical Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.3390/jcm10040795](https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm10040795)

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