

New Research Finds Tablet Device a Potential Risk for Young Children

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FULL TEXT

Curtin University (formerly the Curtin University of Technology) issued the following news release:

The use of tablet devices among young children may increase the risk of neck, back and arm pain and reduce physical activity, new Curtin University research which recommends traditional toy play has found.

The research, published in Applied Ergonomics, investigated the head, trunk and arm postures, muscle activity, sedentariness and physical activity of young children aged three to five years while using a tablet computer compared to watching TV and non-screen toy play.

Lead researcher John Curtin Distinguished Professor Leon Straker, from the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Curtin University, said the findings suggest tablet use among young children may contribute to increased musculoskeletal risk and sedentary behaviour, and reduced physical activity.

"We know that tablet use among young children is increasing and becoming more widespread, but little has previously been known about the potential musculoskeletal and physical activity implications of these devices," Professor Straker said.

"This is the first detailed examination of the physical implications of the use of contemporary mobile touch screen devices by young children.

"Through this research, we found children had altered posture, muscle activity, sitting time and physical activity while playing with tablet computers compared to both TV watching and non-screen toy play. Those changes may lead to potential musculoskeletal and physical activity-related risks, but there are also potential benefits if these devices are used wisely."

Professor Straker said non-screen toy play should be encouraged among young children, urging parents and caretakers to ensure adequate traditional toy play because of its physical activity benefits.

"Given evidence of increasing use, it is important to understand the physical impacts of these new screen technologies on young children and provide young children with appropriate early life experiences in using mobile technology so they can gain the benefits without the harms," he said.

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