

# Effect of types of screen use on child mental health examined

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(HealthDay)—Higher levels of screen use are associated with poor

mental health for children and youth during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study published online Dec. 28 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Xuedi Li, from the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and colleagues assessed whether specific forms of screen use (television [TV] or [digital media](#), video games, electronic learning, and video-chatting time) were associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, conduct problems, irritability, hyperactivity, and inattention in children and youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis included two community cohorts and two clinically referred cohorts (2,026 children and youth aged 2 to 18 years) assessed between May 2020 and April 2021.

The researchers found that in [younger children](#) (mean age, 5.9 years; 51.7 percent male), higher TV or digital media time was associated with higher levels of conduct problems (age 2 to 4 years:  $\beta$ , 0.22; age 4 years or older:  $\beta$ , 0.07) and hyperactivity/inattention ( $\beta$ , 0.07). Higher levels of TV or digital media time were associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and inattention, while higher levels of [video game](#) time were associated with higher levels of depression, irritability, inattention, and hyperactivity in [older children](#) and youth (mean age, 11.3 years; 56.5 percent male). Higher levels of depression and anxiety were tied to higher levels of electronic learning time.

"These findings suggest that policy intervention as well as evidence-informed social supports are needed to promote healthful screen use and mental health in children and youth during the pandemic and beyond," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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