

# The 8 health hazards of watching TV

South African medical-insurance company, Affinity Health this week released a statement exploring the impact that extensive television watching has on health. The resounding conclusion: watching too much television can cause a wide range of health hazards that should not be ignored.



Source: Supplied.

"The human body is not designed to sit for extended periods. Thus, sitting in front of the television for extended periods causes many health problems.

"While for many, it's impossible to eliminate TV viewing time from one's life, we should all be mindful of how much time we spend watching," says Murray Hewlett, chief executive officer of Affinity Health.

Hewlett went on to outline the eight health hazards of watching TV.

- **Higher risk of cardiovascular disease** Sedentary behaviour, or sitting for long periods rather than being physically active, is one of the significant risk factors for coronary heart disease. According to a study published in *BMC Medicine*, if people watched less than an hour of television per day, 11% of cases of coronary heart disease could be avoided.
- **Sleep-pattern disruption** Doctors have always emphasised the importance of getting enough sleep to maintain good health. Too much television is bad for your sleep. The light from the television stimulates the brain while decreasing melatonin production, which promotes sleep. Melatonin levels rise in the body, particularly in the evenings, to help it relax for the night. Too much television disrupts this natural balance, resulting in fatigue and irregular sleep patterns.
- **Increased chance of developing diabetes** Researchers' scientific studies have concluded that excessive TV viewing increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Every two hours, per day, of TV viewing increased the risk by 14%.
- **Increased risk of obesity** Obesity is a risk factor for adults and children who watch too much television. Sitting for long periods causes the body's metabolic rate to slow. As a result, more fat is stored.
- **Possibility of developing attention deficit disorder** Children who spend extended periods watching television are more likely to develop neurological disorders and have difficulty concentrating. The rapidly changing images and sounds are said to be hazardous to young children.

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Kaushik Ramaiya 30 Dec 2022





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- **Increased risk of developing asthma** A study in the United Kingdom on 3,000 children aged less than one year to 11 years found that watching TV for two or more hours per day increased their risk of developing asthma.
  - **Slow mental development** Scientists have concluded that watching television has no benefits for children under two. These children learn far more from human interaction than from watching a screen. According to the American Academy of Paediatrics, children over the age of two should not watch more than two hours of television per day.
  - **More strain on the eyes** It is no secret that excessive TV viewing puts undue strain on the eyes. Avoid watching TV for long periods in a dark room to prevent eye strain. Increasing the amount of light in a room raises the average amount of light, causing your irises to close slightly, allowing less light in and potentially causing less eye fatigue.

"In today's world, it is impossible to avoid watching television. It is quickly becoming a favourite pastime for both children and adults," Hewlett said. "While it could be argued that watching educational programmes helps one's knowledge quotient, it is widely accepted that the risks outweigh the benefits."

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