

Health in the Media

Does Too Much TV Make You Depressed?

Researchers surveyed over 4,000 healthy high school students to determine if media usage is linked to depression. The average amounts of daily media usage for the teenagers in the study were:

- 2.3 hours watching TV with an additional 37 minutes watching movies or videos
- 2.3 hours listening to music
- 25 minutes playing computer games

Seven years later, researchers revisited the study subjects and tested them for depression.

Researchers omitted data from people who reported feeling depressed as teenagers to eliminate the possibility that depressed teens tend to use media more often. The researchers found that the people who were depressed in their 20s had watched more television as teenagers—an average of 22 more minutes per day—than those who were not depressed. Other forms of media, including computer games and videos, were not linked with depression.

Researchers suggest that the time people spend watching TV leaves less time for physical activity and sleep, which help prevent depression. Exposure to television may also make people feel anxious or lead them to develop low self-esteem, which can contribute to depression. This is because television programs often present an unrealistic view of the world. Images of people who are wealthier, more physically attractive, and happier than themselves can cause people to become dissatisfied with their own lives.

Thinking Critically

1. You just read a few different explanations for the link between watching too much TV and feeling depressed. Which of these explanations do you find most convincing and why? Use evidence to support your answer.
2. Given this study's finding, what advice would you give to other teenagers, or younger siblings, about watching television? Should this research influence how much television or what types of shows someone watches? Why or why not?



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borderline personality disorder

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