

Kids Say TV is Not the Enemy of Physical Activity

Tuesday, December 09, 2003

According to children, TV and computer games do not discourage them from being active – in fact, they can encourage it.

Health Minister Lea Stevens says an Australian-first study carried out in Adelaide shows that children think television and computer games can happily co-exist with other activities such as homework and play.

“This research may come as a surprise to many adults in that it also suggests television is not the first choice for children in their spare time,” the Minister says.

“There are many computer games on the market now where children play virtual games of football or cricket, and there is always sport on television.

“Children are saying these games and programs often make them want to take part in similar activities.

“The challenge for adults is not so much to stop kids from watching TV but to channel this enthusiasm for play and fun into healthy, physical activity.”

“The findings come from research for the Department of Human Services carried out by a team from Flinders University, the University of South Australia and the Women’s and Children’s Hospital.

“The *Research Study of Physical Activity and Children* looked into the attitudes of South Australian children to physical activity. It was presented at the National Physical Activity Conference in Fremantle last month and also at a major early childhood conference in Europe.

“The study forms the basis for *be active*, the State Government’s campaign to increase the activity level of 8-12-year old children.

“This research is generating considerable interest on the national and international stage and is challenging the way we think our kids are thinking.

“The message is that parents trying to get children to be active should not see television and computer games as the enemy of physical activity.

“It’s OK for kids to watch TV or play the computer, as long as they’re getting enough physical exercise as well.

“Being active is vital for children’s physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual health and it’s clear physical exercise makes for happier children and better educational outcomes,” Ms Stevens says.

Copyright © South Australia Department of Health, 2004. Source: <http://www.healthysa.sa.gov.au/detail.asp?item=4336>, accessed July 27, 2004.