

Tekst 8

Turn off TV, girls - or risk early puberty

Patrick Foster

1 Watching too much television as a child may trigger serious health problems such as autism and obesity, and in girls the early onset of puberty, a scientist has claimed.

2 Writing in the journal *Biologist*, Dr Aric Sigman says that the average six-year-old child in Britain will have already spent a year watching television, and claims that the simple act of staring at a bright television screen, regardless of a programme's content, can damage a child's health.

3 Dr Sigman identified 15 negative effects that, he says, television can have on youngsters, ranging from short-sightedness and diabetes to premature puberty and autism. "Given the evidence, it would be sensible to cordon off the early years of child development as a time when screen media is excluded and then introduced judiciously as the child matures. To allow children to continue to watch this much screen media is an abdication of parental responsibility. Truly hands-off parenting," he writes.

4 Dr Sigman's report, which is based on his analysis of 35 scientific studies, claims that television viewing affects levels of melatonin, a hormone linked to when puberty occurs in girls. Melatonin levels increase in the evening, at the onset of darkness, but staring into a bright screen during this period hinders its production.



Research has shown that melatonin affects puberty in females more than males. "Animal studies have shown that low melatonin levels have an important role in promoting an early onset of puberty," Dr Sigman says. Girls have been reaching puberty earlier since the 1950s, which previous research had blamed on an average increase in female weight, but he claims that lower melatonin levels may be another cause.

5 Dr Sigman, an esteemed member of the Institute of Biology and associate fellow of the British Psychological Society, says that watching television also damages sleep patterns, causes over-eating and increases the risk of type 2 diabetes. "Television may induce us to eat more [by] causing our brain to monitor external non-food cues — the television screen — as opposed to internal food cues telling us that we have stuffed ourselves and can stop eating." Low attention spans and poor educational achievement could also be linked to television viewing habits.

The Times

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- 2p **37** Geef voor elk van de volgende uitspraken aan of deze wel of niet overeenkomt met het advies van Dr Sigman (alinea's 1 tot en met 3).
- 1 Children should not be allowed to watch certain types of programmes at all.
 - 2 The amount of time that older children spend on watching television should be restricted.
 - 3 Parents should regularly watch television together with their children.
 - 4 Watching television is harmful to very young children.
- Noteer het nummer van elke uitspraak, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p **38** What becomes clear from paragraph 4?
Dr Sigman's findings
- A are not in line with the results of experiments done on animals reaching puberty.
 - B provide a new explanation as to why girls reach puberty at an earlier age.
 - C throw a different light on earlier research into the effects of television on girls reaching puberty.
- 1p **39** Which of the following characterises paragraph 5?
- A It analyses the findings published in Dr Sigman's report.
 - B It confirms the findings published in Dr Sigman's report.
 - C It criticises the findings published in Dr Sigman's report.
 - D It expands on the findings published in Dr Sigman's report.
- 1p **40** Geeft de schrijver aan dat Dr Sigman een geloofwaardig wetenschapper is? Zo nee, antwoord "Nee". Zo ja, citeer het zinsgedeelte dat je antwoord ondersteunt.