

Healthy Connections

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TV Leads to Early Puberty

Children, especially girls, are reaching puberty at alarmingly younger ages every year. This is a major problem, since with longer lives and more education, most women want to put off having children to a later age than ever before.

The sexualizing of children has been blamed on too much sex on TV—but now researchers have found that even watching wholesome family fare can

bring on early puberty.

Gaia Vince writes in *New Scientist* that this is because children who watch a lot of TV produce less melatonin, the sleep hormone that has been linked to the onset of puberty. Scientists at the University of Florence found that when kids were kept away from TV,



computers and video games, their melatonin production increased by about 30%.

"Girls are reaching puberty much earlier than in the 1950s. One reason is due to their average increase in weight; but another may be due to reduced levels of melatonin," says researcher Roberto Salti.

"Animal studies have shown that low melatonin levels have an important role in *(cont. on page 2)*

Sleep More to Gain Less

Could lack of sleep be contributing to America's obesity epidemic?

A recent Columbia University study found that not getting enough sleep could put you at increased risk for weight gain. The study, presented at the meeting of the North American Association for the Study of Obesity, analyzed data from 18,000 adults and found that those who slept less than the recommended seven hours a night had an increased risk of

obesity. People who slept for less than four hours per night were 73 percent more likely to be obese than those who slept for seven to nine hours.

Getting five hours of sleep or less decreased that risk to 50 percent, and getting six hours or less decreased it even more to 23 percent.

While it's still unclear exactly what causes this increased risk, scientists believe that lack of sleep lowers the amount of leptin your body produces.

Leptin is a protein that suppresses appetite and is responsible for telling your brain when your stomach is full.

In addition, when you are sleep-deprived, you are less able to make clear decisions and may eat more food than your body actually needs. So what's the take-home lesson? A good night's sleep is not only critical for your mental health, it may also be a crucial part of your diet.

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TV Leads to Early Puberty

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promoting an early onset of puberty."

Salti and colleagues studied 74 children aged between six and 12 years old, who normally watched an average three hours of television in the evening between 2000 and midnight. The youngsters, from the Tuscan town of Cavriglia, were encouraged to watch more TV than usual for a week preceding the study.

During the subsequent seven-day experiment, the children were not allowed to watch TV and their families were also asked to reduce the use of other sources of artificial light. At the end of the week, the children's melatonin levels

had risen by an average of 30 per cent, and the effect was most pronounced in the youngest children.

It's thought that long exposure to artificial light reduces the body's production of melatonin, while regular alternating periods of natural sunlight and darkness increases it. Children whose bodies contain more melatonin will reach puberty at a later age.

Melatonin levels may also account for the increased rate of breast cancer in women who work the night shift.

Another reason for early puberty in children who watch a lot of TV may be that they weigh more, since they do not get enough exercise, and increased weight also leads to early puberty. Researcher

Alessandra Graziottin says, "U.S. studies have shown that the greater the exposure to television, the earlier the age of sexual experience, including teenage pregnancies."

Changing the channel won't work—make the kids go out and play.

If the problem is weight, help your kids get a new body and [spiritual growth](#), all at the same time.

16:51 28 June 2004
NewScientist.com news service
Gaia Vince

<http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/hardtruth/populationcontrolagenda2.htm>

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