

More TV time equals higher consumption of sweetened beverages among children

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More time in front of the TV set and higher exposure to TV adverts may lead to increased consumption of sweetened beverages among children. This is the conclusion of a new study from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The parents of more than 1,700 two- to four-year-olds in Sweden responded to questions about their children's TV and screen habits and consumption of sweetened drinks.

About one parent in seven indicated that they tried to reduce their children's exposure to TV adverts; the same parents stated that their children were less prone to drink [soft drinks](#) and other sweetened beverages. Children of parents who were less strict about TV adverts were twice as likely to consume sweetened beverages every week.

The study was conducted in 2007–2010 as part of the EU research project IDEFICS – Identification and Prevention of Dietary and Lifestyle -Induced [Health Effects](#) in Children and Infants. It reveals a very clear link between children's TV habits and their consumption of sweetened drinks.

'The children who watched more TV were more likely to drink these beverages. In fact, each additional hour in front of the TV increased the likelihood of regular consumption by 50 per cent. A similar link was found for total [screen time](#),' says Stina Olafsdottir, PhD student at the Department of Food and Nutrition, and Sport Science and one of the researchers behind the study.

The study also found that children with higher exposure to food adverts on TV were more likely to consume sweetened beverages on a regular basis in a follow-up study conducted two years after the initial study.

However, exposure to TV adverts could not explain the link between TV habit and [beverage consumption](#) entirely. It is therefore likely that the

TV programmes watched also matter or that children simply enjoy drinking these types of beverages while [watching TV](#).

The article Young children's screen habits are associated with consumption of sweetened beverages independently of parental norms is published in the *International Journal of Public Health*.

More information: Olafsdottir, S. et al. Young children's screen habits are associated with consumption of sweetened beverages independently of parental norms, *International Journal of Public Health*. link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00038-013-0473-2

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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