

[IMAGE]

Screen Time and Autism

By Editorial Staff

What parent hasn't spent time in front of the TV with their new baby? Whether relaxing / bonding with their child or exposing them to educational information (think "Sesame Street" and similar programming), most parents start screen time early and often. With the proliferation of technology such as tablets and laptops, the opportunities for screen time from a young age have only been magnified. But when it comes to infant exposure to screen time, here's the big problem, according to new research: it could increase the risk of developing autism.

When infants reached 1 year of age, researchers gathered data from their mothers on the numbers of hours per day they let their child watch TV and/or DVDs: no screen time, less than one hour, 1-2 hours, 2-4 hours and four hours or more. Mothers were asked the same question when their child turned 3 years of age, at which time researchers also inquired about any diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) by the child's doctor.

baby and laptop - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Longer screen time at 1 year of age was significantly associated with ASD at 3 years of age, with boys three times more likely to be diagnosed than girls with similar screen times. While the study evaluated TV / DVD use only, the researchers warn that with screen time on the rise via other mediums (computers, phones, etc.), their findings (which appear in *JAMA Pediatrics*) may be only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the potential association between early screen time and autism.

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior, and is often diagnosed after age 2, which is why the authors of this study waited until children were age 3 to evaluate the presence of ASD. To learn more about autism, [click here](#).

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