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July 16, 2004

TELEVISION

Study links TV to adverse health

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LONDON — Children who watch more than two hours of television a night seem to be at higher risk of becoming smokers or being fat, being out of shape or having high cholesterol as adults, according to a new study.

Watching TV in childhood and adolescence has long been linked to adverse health indicators, including obesity, poor fitness and high cholesterol, but the study published today in the Lancet was the first to track a group from birth to adulthood.

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The researchers from the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit assessed about 1,000 people born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1972-73 at regular intervals until age 26. They investigated associations between childhood TV viewing and body-mass index, or BMI, cardio-respiratory fitness, cholesterol level, smoking status and blood pressure.

They found that even an average weeknight viewing of one to two hours between ages 5 and 15 was associated with higher body-mass index, lower cardio-respiratory fitness, increased smoking and raised cholesterol.

This was the case even after they adjusted for such

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factors as family economics, the smoking habits and weight of the parents, and the children's size at age 5.

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