



Are computers a health risk to children?

BY CHIROFAMILY

Computers have become an integral part of a child's life, at home and at school. Research conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that children are spending as much time in front of a computer screen as they are outdoors. And that number has tripled in the past decade. In 1999, children between the ages of 8 and 18 spent about 27 minutes a day on a computer. In 2009, the estimate soared to one hour and 29 minutes.

Computer usage isn't purely an academic endeavor. Social networking and video gaming represent the majority of time that children spend in front of a computer screen. And while they may be gaining some knowledge, they're also putting themselves at risk for a variety of health conditions. Nervous system disturbance, repetitive stress injury (RSI), neck and upper cervical subluxation, and electromagnetic radiation present some of the greatest concerns.

Poor ergonomics contribute to subluxation, as youngsters are hunched over a computer keyboard or leaning in toward the screen. Improper positioning impacts the back, shoulders, neck, arms, and wrists. Positioning the screen to be angled slightly below eye level and elevating the keyboard and mouse so that hands are in straight alignment with the forearms (so the wrists don't bend) will vastly improve posture. The chair should provide support for the back, so that the child is seated in an upright position without slouching. Feet should be able to easily touch the floor, and the knees should be level with the hips.

RSIs are a common ailment of video gamers, frequently affecting the extensor tendon in the thumb. The problem can be exacerbated by over-zealous players who hit the buttons too hard. Children should also be encouraged to take frequent breaks so they can shake and flex their hands and arms.

If you've ever spent hours in front of a computer and walked away feeling tired and bleary eyed, you were probably experiencing the effects of electromagnetic radiation. EMR is emitted by the computer and is comparable to low-level x-rays. Excessive exposure to EMR creates a potential hazard for cancer, birth defects, and miscarriages. Symptoms include such nervous system disturbances as dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches, dehydration, irritability, confusion, and fatigue. To reduce the risk of EMR, children should reduce the amount of time spent in front of the computer, sit farther from the screen, and use a computer ventilator or fan. In addition, a diet that is rich in vitamins A and C can reduce the risk of this harmful radiation. Advise computer lovers to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables, particularly carrots, tomatoes, strawberries, and oranges.

CHIROFAMILY



Our bodies might not be keeping pace with the rapid increase of computer and electronics usage but we can still take steps to prevent unnecessary health risks.

ABOUT CHIROFAMILY

Chirofamily is a team of six Chiropractors located in the Sydney beachside suburb of Coogee. Established more than 25 years ago, Chirofamily has been caring for the community with Chiropractic care and health education with an interest in creating the best health outcomes for clients.

Chiropractic care looks at the healthy functioning of the nervous system. A healthy nervous system allows your body even better efficiency to self-heal and self-regulate.

For more information on our Doctors, services and care visit our website at www.chirofamily.com.au