

**Family determinants of sedentarism in Portuguese children aged 7 to 9 years old**

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**Background:** Sedentary activities such as television, electronic games and computer use are associated with childhood obesity.

**Purpose:** To investigate the influence of family, child and environmental characteristics, in the time that children watched television, used computer and played electronic games and, to analyze the effect of these sedentary activities in the prevalence of obesity.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study of children 7 to 9.5 years old was performed. Weight, height, triceps and subscapular skinfolds were measured. Parents filled out a questionnaire about family characteristics.

**Results:** The prevalence of obesity is lowest among children watching 0-2 hours a day and highest among those watching 3 or more hours a day ( $p < 0.001$ ). Use of electronic games was significantly associated with the prevalence of obesity. Children who had greatest physical activity spent less time watching television, but more time using the computer and playing electronic games. Concerning parents, an highest educational level was associated with: less time watching television and playing electronic games and more time using the computer.

**Conclusion:** The results suggest that any intervention strategies to prevent and reduce childhood obesity must involve all the family.