

 MIGRAINE


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## Long screen time exposure could increase the risk of migraine

Time spent looking at smartphones, tablets, computer screens and televisions correlates with the risk of migraine in young adults, a new study shows. Previous studies have associated long periods spent watching television with an increased risk of both migraine and nonmigraine headaches, but the composite effect of screen time, including traditional and newer electronic devices, has not been examined until now.

Several studies have evaluated the factors that dispose individuals to migraine, including screen time. However, according to Ilaria Montagni, the lead author of the new study, few data exist on the use of newer mobile devices, such as smartphones or tablets, particularly among young adults.

Migraine typically begins in young adulthood and, as Montagni points out, “students

often have high screen time exposure because they increasingly use computers for academic work. In addition, they spend on average 2 h per day watching television, and most of them also spend substantial amount of time using a smartphone.”

In a cross-sectional study comprising 4,927 French students (mean age 20.8 years, 75.5% female) from the Internet-based Students Health Research Enterprise (i-Share) cohort, Montagni and colleagues analysed self-reported data on screen time exposure and symptoms of headache and migraine. Headache that was reported to be accompanied by nausea or vomiting, and/or sensitivity to light or sound, was classified as migraine. In addition, migraine preceded with visual, sensory or motor disturbances was classified as migraine with aura.

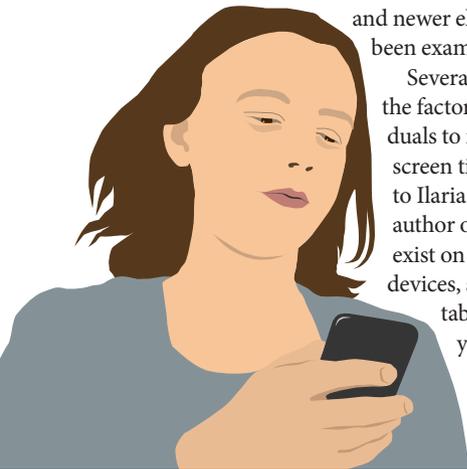
Those i-Share participants who were in the highest screen time quartile (over 2 h of screen time

daily) had an increased likelihood of reporting migraine (OR 1.37; 95% CI 1.14–1.66). The results could imply that looking at the smaller screens of mobile devices have a similar capacity to increase the risk of migraine as does television viewing. Interestingly, long screen time was not linked to an increased susceptibility to nonmigraine headaches.

The study was not designed to address the mechanisms underlying the association between screen time and migraine. “The next step is to find out whether the use of electronic screens could trigger migraine,” Montagni comments. Another important question is whether reduction of screen time could reduce the risk of migraine or alleviate existing migraine.

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