

Children's sedentary lifestyles and obesity - exploring and connecting the diversity of the Occupational Therapy role

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Introduction/Rationale: Obesity reduces children's opportunities to meaningfully engage in desired occupations including social participation and play and is an emerging area of Occupational Therapy practice. Levels of childhood obesity are on the increase resulting in many associated health challenges, and participation challenges.

Objective: This paper explores the relationship between occupational therapy, sedentary lifestyles and childhood obesity. It presents some of the emerging questions and reflections regarding this topic.

Method: A review of occupational therapy literature was conducted using combined search terms "sedentary lifestyle", "occupational therapy", "obesity", "childhood obesity", "intervention", "participation" and "children". Databases searched were CINAHL Plus, Psych info, Medline (EBSCO) and EMBASE.

Results/Implications for practice: There appears to be a correlation between sedentary lifestyles and childhood obesity, with children living more sedentary lifestyles due to increased screen time and video games. Other correlations exist between the decrease of physical activity and growing obesity trends. There appears to be a focus on physical activity, lifestyle interventions, diet, and nutrition interventions as strategies to address challenges of childhood obesity. While children's sedentary lifestyles appears to be a factor in childhood obesity, a question arises concerning client centred practice and meaningful activity. How do occupational therapists support meaningful physically activity with children who select sedentary activities as their chosen occupations?

Conclusion: As there appears to be a correlation between sedentary lifestyles and childhood obesity, greater knowledge and research on this area is warranted. Remaining client centred, and supporting meaningful sedentary activities, may be a challenge for occupational therapists when address childhood obesity.