

Is Middle Childhood Really as Quiet a Period of Physical and Mental Development as Most Think?

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Children between the ages of 6 and 11 years are often considered to be in a latency period for physical and mental development as they move through elementary school.

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Children between the ages of 6 and 11 years are often considered to be in a latency period for physical and mental development as they move through elementary school. Vaccines are not given during this period and many of these children don't come in for the recommended preventive services visit as outlined in *Bright Futures*. How worried should we be about that?

A new study in our journal by Parasuraman et al

([10.1542/peds.2019-2244](#)) provides us with a detailed

epidemiologic look at middle childhood using the 2016-17 National Surveys of Children's Health (NSCH).

The authors share with us information on over 21,500 children ages 6-11 years related to health, behaviors, and sociodemographic characteristics. The study notes that the most of children in this age group are in good physical and oral health, but 20% of these children have at least two health conditions or are considered as having special health care needs. There are also some behaviors that raise concern.

To better understand just what these behaviors are and what actions we might take, we urge you to read the discussion section of this study but also an accompanying commentary by *Bright Futures* editors Drs. Joseph Hagan and Judith Shaw from the University of Vermont ([10.1542/peds.2020-0560](#)). The study by Parasuraman et al reveals that at least one-third of the middle childhood children in this study were spending more than 4 hours a day on screen-time activities. These activities take away from other health behaviors such as adequate sleep, exercise and connectedness to families and perhaps increase the risk of obesity, risk-taking behaviors, and mental health issues. There is much to be learned about middle childhood from both this study and the accompanying commentary that may change what you are currently doing during the health maintenance visits between 6 to 11 years and might even make you work harder to have these patients attend these visits in the first place. [Link to both and learn more.](#)

- [Primary Care Interventions for Early Childhood Development: A Systematic Review](#)

- [Advocacy for Improving Nutrition in the First 1000 Days to Support Childhood Development and Adult Health](#)
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