

- Health

Childhood obesity rising as pandemic keeps youngsters glued to gadgets

The National - News · 22 Mar 2021 · 7

Pupils in the UAE are less active, more obese and spending more time on their electronic devices because of Covid-19, a survey by the Ministry of Health and Prevention found.



A study of 27,754 parents found that pupils were 46 percent less physically active than before the pandemic.

The use of electronics for education and entertainment has increased during the past 12 months. The lack of physical activity, coupled with the increase in the use of electronic devices and ordering food from restaurants, is leading to a rise in obesity levels.

Children experienced more sleep deprivation and the pandemic had a negative effect on the mental health of nearly half of the Emirati pupils who were polled.

The survey found disabled children needed regular physiotherapy to get rid of the adverse effects of the pandemic.

Dr Hussein Al Rand, assistant undersecretary for centres and health clinics at the Ministry of Health and Prevention, said the study would be used to update pupils' health database.

The findings will be used to support the state's health care planning strategies and improve the quality of services after the pandemic.

"Through the outcomes, a number of health indicators of the national agenda will be updated, especially obesity, physical activity and healthy food among children," Dr Al Rand said. "In the mean time, a set of programmes and initiatives will be prepared to come up with proper solutions to the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on the public health of school pupils."

Dr Naglaa Sajwani, head of the school health department at the ministry, said it was important for families to adopt healthy habits at home, such as getting the right nutrition and exercising.

She said pupils should be educated on the proper way of using electronic devices "to prevent their negative effects, including obesity, back pain and vision problems".

Pupils should also get enough sleep, Dr Sajwani said.

The survey was conducted by the Ministry of Health and Prevention in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre.

The use of electronics for education and entertainment has increased