

affect only a small subgroup of players. People who play excessively are the most at risk from developing health problems, although more research is needed.^{3,4}

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Playing video games seems to have few serious acute adverse effects on health

EDITOR—Cleary et al's letter about hand-arm vibration syndrome in people who play computer games needs to be put into a general context.¹ I have examined both the possible dangers and the potential benefits of playing video games, and the literature suggests that they can have positive health benefits for a large range of subgroups—for example, the rehabilitation of patients with stroke or who have received burns, and to reduce pain in children undergoing chemotherapy.^{2,3}

Medical side effects of playing video games have been reported^{4,5} and include photosensitive epilepsy, head and eye strains, auditory hallucinations, enuresis, encopresis, wrist pain, neck pain, and repetitive strain injuries. The possible long term effects and the relation of playing video games to conditions such as obesity remain speculative. All the case studies showing negative consequences of playing were of children and adolescents who used video games excessively.

When all factors and variables are taken into account and the prevalence of play is considered there is little evidence of serious acute adverse effects from moderate play. Adverse effects are likely to be relatively minor and temporary, resolving spontaneously with decreased frequency of play, or to



Rapid responses

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