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Video Games and Exercise

By Paul Sisco

October 30, 2009 11:38 PM

The popularity of video games continues to increase worldwide. Does that explain the sharp rise in child and adolescent obesity? Not necessarily so, but the very profitable video game industry isn't taking any chances. Paul Sisco has more.

Far too many children today are exercising their thumbs more than the rest of their bodies. It's a concern to parents, and increasingly to the multibillion-dollar industry some people are blaming it on. Six-year-old Max speaks from experience?

"The gameboy only includes my hand, you only have to press buttons, and on the computer, you just have to click on the mouse and use the keys," says Max.

Toy companies worry there will be a backlash against them. They also see opportunity. Brian Goldner, with Hasbro Toys, says, "We really saw an opportunity in the market place because consumers were telling us they want their kids to be more physically active."

The most successful entertainment companies are bringing to the market, video games making you jump, swing, punch, and bounce.

What do the kids think?

"I was pretty much moving my body, but, yeah. It was good," says Max.

Kate is 10 and she says, "You're just moving your feet, but it's fun. It makes exercise have a whole new way."

Her more cynical brother David is 12. He says, "If there were no such things as calories, I would probably never ever buy it."

But parents are, says analyst Jinny Gudmundsen with Computing With Kids.

"I think they have a great novelty factor. I think, initially, kids will be very drawn to them. Will they stay and play with this gaming system every day? I doubt it."

Manufacturers are betting otherwise, and games like Dance Dance Revolution, and others are getting kids moving again. Industry leaders say they'll continue stressing the 'active' in interactive entertainment; a plus for kids, parents and the multibillion video game industry.



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