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Study: Video Game Helps Girls' Brains

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Next time somebody scolds you for wasting time playing video games, reply with Dr. Rex Jung's new research showing that Tetris helps expand the brain's gray matter.

The MIND Institute researcher used the popular video game, together with high-tech brain imaging techniques, to test the effect on the brain of performing a complex task.

Researchers studied 26 girls, ages 12 to 15, and found that playing Tetris every day for three months bulked up parts of the brain associated with motor function "much like building up your muscles with exercise," Jung said.

Other areas of the brain became more efficient, allowing the girls to achieve higher scores with less expenditure of energy, said Jung, a research scientist at the MIND Research Network and a University of New Mexico professor of neurosurgery.

"We have an indication that it changes your brain when you play these games," he said. "It changes the structure and function of the brain."

Researchers used MRI scans to image the girls' brains while they played the video game. Half the girls were asked to play the game daily for three months before they were imaged a second time.

"We studied girls, because boys are playing video games rather obsessively during that young period," Jung said.