



TV and Your Child

DID YOU KNOW that children who watch a lot of TV and movies tend to:

Perform worse in school.

- They spend less time reading.
- They have shorter attention spans.
- Their vocabulary is not as highly developed.

Be more overweight.

- They snack excessively while watching TV.
- They see food in programs and ads that promote unhealthy eating choices.
- They tend to exercise less.

Act the way TV characters act.

- Children as young as 1 year old learn behaviors from television.
- Children imitate actions and scripts from TV programs instead of creating their own play ideas.

See ads that are harmful to them.

- Children under the age of 6 cannot tell the difference between an ad and a show.
- Children are encouraged to nag their parents for things they see on TV.

Children learn to see violence as an acceptable form of play and way to solve problems.

Important Facts and Figures

- ★ *The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends **no TV or videos** for children under the age of 2.*
- ★ *Regularly watching TV for 10 or more hours a week has been shown to **negatively affect academic performance.***
- ★ *The **foods featured on TV** are usually very unhealthy (high in sugar and fat) and contribute to obesity.*
- ★ ***Entertainment violence** is stored in the brain as if it were a real experience. This “memory” can negatively affect behavior.*
- ★ *Children and adolescents in the United States spend **22 to 28 hours a week watching TV.** By the time they are 70 they will have spent 7 to 10 years watching TV.*

What you can do about your family's viewing habits:

Reduce the role of TV in your family.

- Agree to limit the time spent watching television. *(to one hour a day, for example)*
- Use a TV guide to help choose programs with your child.

Help your child turn off the TV.

- Give your child a warning a few minutes before the TV goes off.
- Help your child come up with things to do when the TV is off.

Watch TV with your kids and discuss what you're watching.

Some conversation starters:

- What did you think about that show/game?
- Did you like it when ___ happened?
Why do you think it happened?
- What was pretend and what was real? How could you tell?
- How can we tell the difference between the ads and the show?
- What would you do if you were in that situation?
- What do you think about how _____ solved their problem?
If you had a problem like that, what could you do /say?
Can you think of a peaceful way to solve that problem ?
- I wonder, why is it usually the male characters that fight?
- I've noticed that women need to be rescued by men a lot. Have you noticed that? I wonder why?
- I wonder, why do the “bad guys” have foreign accents?
Wear dark colors? Have darker skin?

Find appealing non-TV activities for your family.

- Go to your local library. *A library card is free!*
- Participate in library sponsored activities: story time, puppet shows, and craft activities.
- Have a family game night. Play board games, cards.
- Read books and tell stories together. Listen to books on tape/CD.
- Start a journal, scrapbook, or photo album.
- Have art supplies available: *crayons, play dough, colored pencils, paper*
- Sing songs or listen to music.
- Go for a walk.
- Do puzzles.

Promote healthy eating habits.

- Make sure TV snacks are healthy: *apple slices, cheese or peanut butter and crackers, raw vegetables*
- Resist junk food advertised on TV.
- Eat together as a family without the TV.

Get support from family and community.

- Talk to other parents, teachers, and caregivers about your efforts to limit your child's TV viewing.

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