

# Fact Sheet for **Parents** **GROWING UP HEALTHY**



5 or more fruits and vegetables • 2 hours or less of screen time • 1 hour of physical activity • Almost no sugary beverages



## Did you know that...

By the time you are 65, you will have seen about 2 million ads on TV?

By the time your child is 18, he or she will have seen more than 200,000 violent acts on TV?

Children who watch more than 10 hours per week of TV are less likely to do well in school?

## Try to make sure your child spends no more than two hours per day in front of a screen.

What is screen time? It's any time spent in front of a screen, for example, to watch television, use the computer, and play video games (not including time needed to complete schoolwork). Our kids are spending more time than ever in front of the screen—almost 6 hours per day. That's about 42 hours per week... more than a full time job!

## How does excessive screen time affect your child?

Excessive screen time affects your child's health, and as a result, affects a lot of other areas in their lives, too. Here are some of the problems associated with spending too much time with the TV, computer, or hand-held device:

- **Kids don't get enough physical activity.** Unless your child is working out to an exercise video or doing Dance, Dance, Revolution, how often are they moving while in front of a screen? The more they watch without moving their bodies, the less time they have to get out and play or be active.
- **Kids develop unhealthy eating habits.** How often does your child grab a snack and then eat in front of the TV or get on the computer? Snacking isn't bad, but are they doing it when they are hungry? The more TV your child watches, the more calories they eat.
- **Kids don't perform as well at school.** The more time children spend watching TV or playing video games, the less time they spend reading or doing their homework—especially true for children who have a TV or computer in their bedrooms and use them unsupervised.
- **Kids are inundated with advertising on TV.** Advertisers are targeting children to buy their products. In 1999, advertisers spent more than \$13 billion focused on advertising and marketing to children and youth. Think about the last TV show that you watched.... How many commercials were there?
- **Advertisers are getting more aggressive** and are promoting their products in the programs themselves, not just in commercials. Look at what your child's favorite character is drinking or eating. Do you recognize the brand?



- Kids are exposed to violence, sex, and adult language. Watching TV or movies, playing video games, or using the computer unsupervised may expose your child to unhealthy behaviors. How many times have you seen something on TV or in a video game that makes you cringe because of the violence, language, or sex? It's no wonder, because
  - about two-thirds of TV programs contain some violence, with an average of 6 violent acts per hour.
  - the number of programs with sexual content has doubled since 1998.
  - 68% of all TV shows include talk about sex and 35% of all shows include sexual behaviors.

## What can you do?

- Help your child be more active. Turn off the TV. Encourage your child to go out and play or turn on music and dance.
- Help your child make healthy eating choices by learning to eat only when he or she is hungry and to choose healthy snacks like fruit or vegetables.
- Help your child do better in school:
- Move the TV to a central location like the family room.
- Keep the TV off until dinner is over and homework is completed.
- Help your child watch programs that are safe and educational:
- Know how much and what they are watching by keeping the TV in a place where you can see the screen.
- Watch the program with them.
- Help your child choose which TV shows, videogames, and websites they can use.
- Help your child be a smart TV watcher.
- Talk with your child about the shows that come on and how advertising works.
- Watch programs with your child.
- Steer them to other activities that do not involve the screen.

### Tips for tuning out and turning off

Turning off the TV doesn't mean that you have to stop what you are doing. You can do things together or your kids (at any age) can do activities by themselves. Kids will find something constructive to do if you give them a few ideas. There are so many other great activities your child can do with 42 hours a week than watch a screen. Try these ideas:

- Homework is always a good place to start. If you have younger children, create a craft box with safe items for them to use (crayons, markers, stickers, tape, etc.) and blank paper. If they know where it is and how to use it, they can keep themselves busy while you make dinner.
- Turn off the TV during dinner and enjoy each other. Ask everyone around the table (this includes you) to share the best and worst parts of their day with each other.
- Let your kids help with dinner or chores around the house. For young kids, it may take a few times to get used to doing chores, but soon things will run much more smoothly.
- Point your kids to a good book, comic book, newspaper, or magazine to read, either for school or for pleasure. If your child can't read alone yet, read aloud to your child.
- Sign your child up for an after-school or sports program in your neighborhood or school.
- Go to the playground or walk around the neighborhood. Everyone in the family can do this together and get active!