



## Help Children Reduce Screen Time

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Here are a few simple tips to help your children reduce their screen time and increase physical activity in order to maintain a healthy weight.

- **Know how much screen media and physical activity your family is getting.** By knowing how much screen time and how much physical activity they get, you will be more aware of how much ENERGY OUT they are burning. Screen time includes TV, DVD, video games, and computer use (not related to school or work). The goal is for them to have no more than 2 hours of screen time a day and get 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day.
- **Talk to your family.** Explain to your children that it's important to sit less and move more so they will stay at a healthy weight, be more energized, have a chance to practice certain skill sets (such as riding a bike or shooting hoops), and socialize with friends and peers. Tell them that you also are going to limit your screen time and increase your physical activity, so you will all be working toward this goal together.
- **Set limits on screen time.** Set a house rule that your children may have no more than 2 hours a day of screen time. More importantly, enforce the rule once it's made. You may want to check into devices or Internet programs that set limits on the TV or on the computer.
- **Minimize the influence of TV in the home.** Do not put a TV or computer in your child's bedroom. This tends to physically isolate family members and decrease interaction. Also, children who have TVs in their room tend to spend almost 1½ hours more in a typical day watching TV than do their peers without a set in their room.
- **Make meal time, family time.** Turn off the TV during family meal time. Better yet, remove the TV from the eating area if you have one there. Family meals are a good time to talk to each other. Research has shown that families who eat together tend to eat more nutritious meals than families who eat separately. Make eating together a priority and schedule in family meals at least two to three times a week.
- **Provide other options and alternatives.** Watching TV can become a habit for your child. Provide other alternatives for them to spend their time, such as playing outside, learning a hobby or sport, or spending time with family and friends.
- **Set a good example.** You need to be a good role model and also limit your screen time to no more than 2 hours per day. If your kids see you following your own rules, then they will be more likely to follow. Instead of watching TV or surfing the Internet, spend time with your family doing something fun and active.
- **Don't use TV to reward or punish a child.** Practices like this make TV seem even more important to children.
- **Be a savvy media consumer.** Advertising of snack foods can influence your children's food preferences. Help your child develop healthy eating habits and become media savvy by teaching them to recognize a sales pitch be it on television, websites, or on the product itself. Ask your child why their favorite cartoon character is trying to get them to eat a certain brand of cereal. Explain to them that this is a way for advertisers to make the cereal more appealing to young people so that they ask their parents to buy the product. Companies advertise to children to make money. **We Can!** offers communities a youth program called Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think, and Be Active!® Sign up your child for this program so they can learn more about becoming media smart.