



The Hazards of Television in Children and Adolescents

For the past 15 years the American Academy of Pediatrics has expressed concerns that television viewing by children may have ill effects as the child grows. According to the Nielsen Media Research data, the average child watches 3 hours of television per day. This does not include time spent playing video games. In 1999 the Kaiser Foundation reported that total media time on the average was 6 1/2 hours per day. The amount of time spent with various media prevents time spent with reading, exercising or playing with friends.

The negative effects from television watching, is huge. Children often cannot tell the difference from what is real and what is not when they watch television. They often will take on attitudes of characters they see on television, so social behavior might greatly be altered by television viewing. Research has shown negative effects on aggressive behavior, violence, sexuality, academic performance, body concept and self-image, nutrition, dieting and substance abuse.

As much as 10 to 20% of real-life violence may be attributable to media violence. There has been shown a correlation between more television viewing during adolescents and the risks of subsequent involvement with violence upon another person.

Adolescents who watch more than 3 hours of television per day are at an elevated risk for sleep problems. Reducing television viewing time can improve the sleep problems that the adolescent is having. Children who have a television set in their room are at a much greater risk for sleep problems.

In a National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, data was collected on 1300 families. The more daily hours of television viewing time were associated with greater attention problems by age 7. Children who watch more television spend less time doing homework, studying and reading. Their behaviors are more impulsive, leading to more behavior problems at school.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S. The risk of smoking has been associated with increased television viewing time. Reducing television viewing may also reduce risks for smoking.

The 3 year National Television Violence Study found the following:

- Nearly two thirds of all TV programs contain violence.
- Children's shows contain the most violence.
- Portrayals of violence are usually glamorized.
- Perpetrators often go unpunished.



Music Television Videos portray overt violence, drug use and sexual content. The findings include the following:

- One fourth of music videos depict weapon carrying.
- One fourth of music videos portray someone using alcohol or tobacco.
- Sexual imagery and sexual innuendoes are highly portrayed in music videos.

As a Parent, What Should you Do?

- Limit children’s total media time to no more than 1-2 hours per day.
- Remove television sets from your children’s bedrooms.
- Discourage television viewing for children younger than 2 years, and encourage more interactive activities that will promote proper brain development like talking, playing, singing and reading together.
- Monitor the shows children and adolescents are viewing. Most programs should be Informational, educational and nonviolent.
- View television programs along with children and discuss the content.
- Use controversial programming as a stepping-off point to initiate discussions about family, values, violence, sex and sexuality and drugs.
- Use the VCR/DVR wisely to show or record high-quality, educational Programming for children.
- Support efforts to establish comprehensive media-education programs in schools.
- Encourage alternative entertainment for children, including reading, athletics, hobbies, and creative play.

Joseph C. Stegman, M.D.
George W. Hatley, PA-C

Maricela Dominguez Gulbranson, M.D. F.A.A.P.
Angela Noone, CPNP

Mark C. Clayton, M.D.

301 Medical Park Drive, St 202B, Concord, NC 28025

Phone: 704-403-2626 | Fax: 704-403-2699 | www.behavioralped.com