



Kapa'a Pediatrics, LLC

Children and Media

What is media?

- Media includes TV, movies, video games, internet, social networking, texting, radio, and recorded music.

How much time do U.S. children spend on media?

- About 65% of children and infants under 2 years old watch TV for 1.5 hours/daily
- 8-18 year olds average more than 7 hours/day of media
- This means by the time your child reaches 70 years of age, they will have spent 7 to 10 years of their lives watching television!

What's the big deal?

- **Violence**
 - More than 3,000 studies have been done on effects of media violence on aggressive behavior. It is well known that witnessing violence on TV, in movies, and in video games results in desensitization of the viewer to real-life violence, which can contribute to aggressive behavior, nightmares, and fear of being harmed.
 - Probably not every child/teen is susceptible, but it depends on a variety of factors such as family stability, personality, witnessing violence firsthand, and psychological factors.
- **Substance use**
 - **Smoking:** Numerous studies have shown that exposure to movie and TV smoking is a key factor in adolescents starting smoking. It may account for 50% of smoking initiation in young teen smokers.
 - **Alcohol:** Increased TV and music video viewing linked to earlier onset of alcohol use. Teens who watched more than 3 R rated movies per month were 5 times more likely to drink alcohol than teens who watched none.
 - **Marijuana:** Viewing R rated movies was associated with six-fold increased risk of trying marijuana.



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- **Sex**
 - About 70% of programs children and teens watch contain sexual content, but only 14% of that content involves responsible sexuality (mentioning risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases).
 - American media is among the most sexually suggestive in the world.
 - Numerous research studies have found that 1) children and teens learn important ideas about sex and sexuality from media, 2) children and teens exposed to sexual content at an early age are more likely to begin having sexual intercourse earlier, 3) Early exposure to sexual content **doubles** risk of teen pregnancy (the US has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the Western world)

What can parents do?

1. Set firm limits on amount of TV (all types of media) your child watches. Schedule no more than 1 to 2 hours per day. Complete homework and household chores before TV. Don't use TV as a reward. Provide alternatives to TV like after school sports, hobbies, chores, and family activities.
2. Have your child plan media use in advance. You can help organize the time and choose programs at the beginning of the week. Make a schedule and post it by the TV or refrigerator as a reminder.
3. Set a good example! Parents are powerful role models. If you want your child to be more active, plan a family hike or exercise program. If you want your child to read more, turn off the TV and read.
4. **Do not allow your child to have a TV in their bedroom.** Why? On average kids with TV in their room watch 1 more hour of TV daily, have 31% increased risk of obesity, and their risk of smoking doubles. Children perform more poorly in school. Parents are less able to monitor what is seen. Also children participate in fewer activities such as reading, hobbies, athletics, and games.
5. **NO TV during dinner.** Dinner is usually the only time families are able to be together. TV during dinner will interfere with or terminate important family conversation.
6. If TV becomes a source of tension and conflict try unplugging it for some time. Institute TV free days or weekends. Children will become very creative when TV is not demanding their attention and time. Consider cancelling cable. Although it may sound crazy - you will save at least \$60 a month (\$720/year) and have more time for family activities and projects.

*** Patient handouts created by Kapa'a Pediatrics are intended to give parents the most common and pertinent facts about a certain issue. If there is ever any concern that your child was given an incorrect diagnosis or is not following the usual expected course for an illness please call us to speak with a physician. (808) 634-8011***