



Television and Children's Weight

Obesity has doubled in children and tripled in adolescent girls in the past 30 years.^{1,2} Less physical activity and more sedentary activities like watching television and playing electronic games are important contributors to this obesity problem.³ On average, kids 2-18 years of age spend five and a half hours per day using various types of media.¹

Numerous studies have shown that television viewing has been consistently associated with an increase in weight problems in children.^{1-3,5} One national study found that the odds of becoming overweight were 40% to 50% higher for youth who watch high amounts of television.^{2,3} Other studies have specifically looked at the amount of time spent playing video games by children, and have also shown this to increase the risk of obesity. However, the impact from watching TV seems to be even greater since less energy is used and kids seem to eat more when watching TV than while playing video games.³

Watching TV not only takes away from time that could be spent in physical activity, but also exposes children to media influences that can affect their food consumption.^{3,4} A typical child watches about 40,000 TV commercials per year.³ Research has shown that exposure to TV advertisements can increase the desire for food in children.^{2,4} Unfortunately, fruits and vegetables are not the foods being promoted, so children tend to eat fewer fruits and vegetables and more high-calorie/low-nutrient foods.

Studies have also shown that parents can make a big difference in the prevention of obesity in children and teenagers.^{1,5} Television should be limited to no more than 10 hours per week.³ Playing electronic games should also be monitored so that kids can have more opportunity to be physically active.^{1,3}

Healthy Kids Meal & Motion Markers™ gives children an incentive to move away from the television and get actively involved in fun physical activity. The wide variety of activities they see on their *My Choices* chart helps them find new ways to have fun and keep healthy.

References:

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