Reducing Screen Time

A complementary strategy to increasing physical activity and improving calorie balance involves reducing “screen time,” or, time spent sitting in front of a computer, video game or TV screen.

• On average, children spend 4.5 hours a day in front of a screen, and approximately 2.5 hours of this is spent watching television.
• Children 2 to 7 years old average 2 hours of television viewing time per day.
• Children aged 8 to 13 average almost 3.5 hours.
• Teens 14 to 18 years of age average approximately 2.75 hours of television per day.
• In addition to television viewing, children also spend time at computers, on the Internet, and on personal gaming devices. The longer children spend in front of a screen on a daily basis, the more likely they are to be overweight.
• Children with screen times greater than 4 hours had a higher incidence of overweight as compared to those that had only one hour per day.
• Children who reduce their screen time also show a reduction in weight.

The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity (2001) recommends that children watch no more than two hours of television per day.

Families can help reduce children’s sedentary screen time with the following strategies:

• Do not place televisions or computers in children’s bedrooms
• Parents should role model for their children and not spend large amounts of time on a home computer or watching television
• Place defined limits on screen time for children
• Encourage active playtime and recreation for the whole family

Sources:


