

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:

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