

TV's Role: Healthy Weight for Kids



Jane U. Edwards, Ph.D., LRD
NDSU Extension Specialist
Nutrition and Health
jedwards@ndsuent.nodak.edu

Excessive television use can influence children's food intake and physical activity patterns to promote increased body fat and the development of overweight.

TV Viewing Habits

Watched > 3 hours per day

High School
North Dakota* 26.3 percent

High School
Nationwide* 38.3 percent

Watched > 2 hours per day

Ages 8-16 years** 67.0 percent

*Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, CDC. 2001.

**Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (1988-1994). Anderson RE et al. JAMA 1998;279: 938-942.

Promotes Increased Body Fat

Children (ages 8-16 years) who watched four or more hours of television per day had greater body fat and body weight (in relation to height) than those who watched less than two hours per day.

(Anderson RE et al, JAMA 1998;279: 938-942).

- Children (ages 8-16 years) watching one or fewer hours of television per day had the lowest prevalence of obesity.

(Crespo CJ et al. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med 2001;155:360-365).

Promotes Less Physical Activity

- Children (ages 4-6 years) with high levels of television viewing and with low levels of physical activity were found to have higher percentages of body fat compared to more active children who watched less television. (Janz KF et al. Prev Med 2002;35:563-571).
- An intervention study with obese children (average age 10 years) found that those who had to pedal a stationary bike while watching television viewed less television (1.6 hr /week compared to 21 hr/week for controls) and lost more body fat (lost 1.2% compared to a gain of 0.9% for the controls). (Faith MS et al. Pediatrics 2001;107:1043-1048).

Media and Advertising Influences

Watching video programs imbedded with food commercials increased preschool (ages 2-6 yrs) children's selection of advertised food items compared to those who did not see the commercials.

Borzekowski DL, Robinson TN. J Am Diet Assoc 2001; 101: 42-46).

- Watching television during meals (2 or more meals per day) was found to result in lower intakes of fruits and vegetables and more pizzas, snack foods and sodas for children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades when compared to children who never or infrequently viewed television during meals.

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/107/1/e7>

- Television viewing for high school students was found to be positively associated with being overweight and eating insufficient fruits and vegetables. (Lowry R et al. J Sch Health. 2002;72 (10):413-421).
- Higher television /video use (>32 hrs/week) for middle and high school students in Minnesota, was associated with higher intakes of soft drinks, snacks, fried foods. (Utter J et al. J Am Diet Assoc. 2003;103: 1298-1305).

Recommended Web Sites:

- Coalition for Quality Children's Media: <http://www.cqcm.org/kidsfirst/start.html>
- Alternatives to Television (The TV Project): <http://www.tvp.org>
- Encourages much less television viewing: <http://www.turnoff.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations

- Eliminate television for children ages 2 and younger.
- Limit children (ages 2 and above) to no more than 2 hours per day of quality media time.
- Remove television sets from children's bedrooms.
- Monitor and view television shows with children.
- Initiate discussions for controversial programming and relate to family values, societal influences, etc.
- Encourage alternative activities: reading, athletics, hobbies and creative play.

Pediatrics 2001;107(2):423-426.

For more information on this and other topics, visit our Web site:

<http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/>

NDSU
Extension Service
North Dakota State University

April 2004

NDSU Extension Service, North Dakota State University of Agriculture and Applied Science, and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Duane Hauck, Director, Fargo, North Dakota. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. We offer our programs and facilities to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, Vietnam era veterans status or sexual orientation; and are an equal opportunity employer. This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request. 701/231-7881.