Helpful Ways to Reduce Your Child’s Screen Time

Here are a few simple tips to help your children reduce their screen time and increase physical activity in order to maintain a healthy weight.

**Know how much screen time, active time your family is getting.**

By knowing how much screen media time, including TV, DVD, video games and non-school- or non-work-related computer and Internet use, your family spends and how much physical activity they get, you will be more aware of their needs for physical activity to maintain energy balance. In order to keep track of screen time, you can create a log and put it next to the TV or video game unit.

* Talk to your family. Explain to your children that it’s important to sit less and move more to stay at a healthy weight.
* Set limits on screen time. Set a house rule that your children may spend no more than two hours a day of screen time. More importantly, enforce the rule once it’s made.
* Minimize the influence of TV in the home. Do not put a TV or computer in your child’s bedroom. This tends to physically isolate family members and decrease interaction. Also, children who have TVs in their room tend to spend almost 1 ½ hours more in a typical day watching TV than their peers without a set in their room.
* Make meal time, family time. Turn off the TV during family meal time. Better yet, remove the TV from the eating area if you other there. Research has shown that families who eat together tend to eat more nutritious meals than families who eat separately.
* Provide other options and alternative. Watching TV can become a habit for your child. Provide other alternatives for them to spend their time, such as playing outside, learning a hobby or sport, or spending time with family and friends.
* Set a good example. You need to be a good role model and also limit your screen time to no more than two hours per day. If your kids see you following your own rules, then they will be more likely to follow. Instead of watching TV or surfing the Internet, spend time with your family doing some fun and active.
* Make screen time, active time. Stretch, do yoga, lift hand weights while watching TV; challenge the family to see who do the most push-ups, jumping jacks, or leg lifts during commercial breaks, or switch to an exercise tape during commercials.
* Make a healthy meal together. When children are involving in the cooking process they are more likely to try and like new and healthier foods.
* Stay involved with what your kid are watching. Watch shows with your children and talk to them about it afterward. Discuss the consequences of violence or talk about stereotyping and prejudice. Discuss the differences between reality and make believe.

For more information about alternatives to TV watching please visit the website: <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/managetv.htm>