



Increase Family Time by Decreasing TV Time

Ever notice how much time your family spends watching television, playing video games, and using the computer? Time spent this way is called screen time. Most Americans spend at least four hours a day looking at TV and other screens. For children this is time away from playing and making friends. Everyone in your family will benefit from decreased screen time and more physical activity, which helps prevent weight gain, heart disease, and diabetes.

What does screen time have to do with nutrition? In the United States, many children overeat. It does not take much overeating to put on extra weight. Just 200 extra calories a day can add 20 pounds in a year. One reason Americans eat more is that the family dinner has moved from the table to the television. Eating in front of screens leads to eating without thinking. It is easy to miss your body's signal that you are full. Over time, extra food means extra weight for you and your family.

Here are a few things you can do:

- ① Remove the TV and other screens from your child's bedroom. A TV in a child's bedroom makes it easy for them to watch too much TV without your supervision.
- ② Set a time limit on screen time. Allow a child over two years of age a total of 1-2 hours per day for TV, video games and computers.

Children younger than two years old do best with no TV.

- ③ Remember, what you do is more important than what you say. Be sure to include yourself in the screen time limit.
- ④ Turn on the TV only when you have something specific to watch. When that show is over, turn off the TV!
- ⑤ Turn off your TV when you eat. When families talk together during meals, children learn better. Also, children tend to eat more vegetables when families eat together.
- ⑥ In the beginning your children may say they are bored. Help your children find new ways to play and discover that books are fun.
- ⑦ Make a list of fun activities with your children. Let them pick one and do it with them.
- ⑧ Be positive. Say, "Let's turn off the TV and go play!" instead of saying "You can't watch TV now because that is the new rule."

Parenting Tip:

The effort to change the screen habit will be worth it to your children's future. Circle what you'd like to do first to cut back on your family's screen time.



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