



**WIC Healthy Family Newsletter**  
Fall 2006

## Save Money: Teach Your Children About TV Ads

- Do you know how many ads a child watches each year?  
a) 400      b) 1000      c) 10,000      d) 40,000
- Do you think an 8 year old child knows that ads are there to sell products?  
a) yes      b) no
- Do you think a 6 year old can tell you the difference between ads and TV shows?  
a) Yes      b) No

You may be surprised. Your child sees about 40,000 ads a year on TV. Most 8 year olds have no idea that ads are there to sell products. And most children six and under cannot tell an ad from a TV show.

**Why so many ads?** It is simple. They work. Ads for toys, snack food and cereal are aimed at your child. The ads have great appeal. Your child may beg for the things he sees advertised on TV. And you may feel like you have to buy the treats just to avoid tears and tantrums.

**What can you do?** Teach your child about advertising. Start early. Understanding how ads work can have a strong impact on the things your child wants. And that impact lasts for the rest of his life.

Tell your child that advertising on TV is there just to make people want things -- even if they don't need

them. Talk about how ads make toys or foods look better than they are in real life. Remind your child of a product he saw in an ad that he did not like once he got it home.

### **If your child is under two years:**

Children younger than 2 develop best without any TV. Play with them, read a book to them, take them for a walk or go to a park to keep them busy. They need full time experience with the real world.

### **If your child is 2 to 6 years old:**

Limit screen time. Older children should have no more than 1 to 2 hours of TV, computer and video game time a day.

Pick ad-free programs. Watch public television stations. They don't show ads during their programs. Watch videotapes or DVDs. You can find them for free at your local library.

Play the "mute" game. Let your child mute the TV volume when an ad starts, and turn the volume back on when it stops. It will help teach your child the difference between ads and TV shows.

Do a reality test. Let your child pick an item in an ad. Visit a store that has it. Ask your child if the real product would be as much fun as it seemed on TV.



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