

Why Weight? Reducing the Influence of TV on Children's Health Teacher Guide

Lesson Objectives:

Participants will become aware of:

- the link between television viewing and childhood obesity
- ways that parent/grandparents can reduce the impact of television on children's health
- the influence of television commercials on children's food choices
- opportunities for consumer involvement in regulating children's TV advertising

Materials:

FCD05-02 Participant handout
FCD05-03 Evaluation/consent form

Note: This lesson focuses on the impact of television on children's health. It could be followed by a lesson on TV violence (using the FCE Choice-TV materials).

Before the lesson:

- Copy the participant handout.
- Copy evaluation materials (questionnaire, consent form). (Print these on separate pages so that the participants can take the consent form home with them.)
- Watch an hour of children's television programming (such as early Saturday morning). Complete the television food advertising log in the participant handout.
- Plan your presentation. The following timing for activities and discussion is suggested for a one hour lesson:

Talk about it – When did you family first get a television set?	10 minutes
Do You Know? quiz and answers	10 minutes
Are You Aware? advertising jingles	5 minutes
Talk about it – What could grandparents do to reduce the impact of television on children's weight?	10 minutes
Talk about it – How could your group support Turn off the TV Week?	10 minutes
Evaluation	10 minutes

	<p><i>Italicized type gives teaching instructions.</i> Bold type is summary statements.</p>
<p>Television is very pervasive in U.S. culture. If you're like most people, you probably have access to a television. Almost every home (98 percent) has a television set; many have more than one set.</p> <p>Families watch TV for many reasons. Sometimes it's used for entertainment. At other times, it may be used for education. Busy parents may use TV for child care.</p>	<p>98 percent of U.S. homes have at least one television.</p> <p>Families watch TV for many reasons. It entertains, educates, and babysits.</p>
<p>Talk about it...</p> <p>When did your family first get a television set? How did it change your lives? Were there restrictions on family viewing times or programs watched?</p>	<p><i>Lead the discussion. Limit to 10 minutes. (You could use a kitchen timer and move on to the next topic when it "rings".) If your group is large, this could be discussed in small groups.</i></p>
<p>Regular TV broadcasting didn't begin until the late 1940s, so many of us may not have gotten acquainted with it as children. Children today, on the other hand, grow up with television from birth.</p> <p>Many children watch a lot of television. TV programs and commercials can influence what they eat. Most research has shown a link between too much TV watching and childhood obesity.</p> <p>About 10 percent of 2- to 5-year-olds and 15 percent of 6- to 19-year-olds are overweight. Even more are at risk of being overweight. African-American and Hispanic children are especially at risk. Excess weight can lead to diabetes, heart disease, joint problems, asthma and other breathing problems, and depression.</p>	<p>Children now grow up with television from birth. Most watch a lot of TV.</p> <p>Most research has shown a link between too much TV watching and childhood obesity.</p> <p>Many children are at risk of being overweight. Excess weight can cause chronic illnesses.</p>
<p>Q1 – Children age 2 to 17 watch almost 3 hours of TV every day, on average. Those 6 years and under spend as much time with screen media (TV, videos, video games, and computers) as they do playing outside or in any other activity except sleeping. Low-income children tend to watch more TV.</p> <p>Q2- 43 percent of children under age 2 watch TV every day. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends limiting the time children spend with TV, video games and the Internet to 2 hours each day.</p>	<p><i>Ask participants to complete the Do You Know? quiz in the handout. Review the quiz answers.</i></p>

<p>They advise that children younger than age 2 shouldn't watch TV at all because learning to talk and play with others is important for brain development during early years.</p> <p>Q3 – 36 percent of children age 6 and younger have a TV in their bedrooms Children watch more when a TV is in their bedrooms – and they tend to weigh more.</p> <p>Q4 – 36 percent of children age 6 and younger live in homes where the TV usually is on “always” or “most of the time”, even if no one is watching. These children watch more TV than in homes where the TV is on less often.</p> <p>Q5 - Food is the most frequently advertised product during children's television programming. It's estimated that children see one food commercial during every 5 minutes of viewing time. Many of the advertised foods are high in fat and sugar.</p> <p>Advertisers market to youth to create brand loyalty which develops as early as 2 years of age. Marketers know that children have considerable purchasing power better known to parents as the “nag factor”.</p>	
<p>Does watching TV have an impact on children's weight? Most research has shown a link. Missing out on physical activity and snacking while watching may promote weight gain.</p>	<p>Most research has shown a link between children's TV watching and their weight. Missing out on physical activity and snacking while watching may promote weight gain.</p>
<p>Young children may view 20,000 to 40,000 television commercials each year. Foods high in sugar and fat are frequently advertised. There is a link between hours of television watched by children and the number of requests that they make for advertised products.</p>	<p>There is a link between hours of TV watched and the number of requests children make for advertised foods. Foods high in fat and sugar are frequently advertised.</p>
<p>Jingle answers:</p> <p>“Betcha you can't eat just one.” Lay's potato chips “For those who think young.” Pepsi “Kid tested. Mother approved” Kix cereal “You deserve a break today.” McDonald's “Good to the last drop.” Maxwell House coffee “Where's the beef?” Wendy's “Taste the rainbow.” Skittles candy</p>	<p><i>Activity: Are You Aware?</i> Ask participants to complete the Are You Aware? Jingle activity in the handout.</p> <p><i>Review jingle answers.</i> Point out that we are all influenced by advertising, although its effect is often subtle.</p>

<p>Young children don't understand what advertising is all about. Most children under age 6 can't tell the difference between TV program content and commercials. Most children under age 8 don't understand the purpose of advertising and tend to accept claims as fact.</p>	<p>Young children don't understand what advertising is all about.</p>
<p>There are few policies on children's food advertising. The advertising industry has voluntary policies that address areas such as product presentations and claims, endorsement and promotion by program characters, sales pressures, disclosures and disclaimers, and safety concerns. The Federal Trade Commission regulates advertising deemed unfair or deceptive.</p> <p>The Children's Television Act (passed by Congress in 1990) mandates advertising limits during programming aired primarily to children under age 12: 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends; 12 minutes per hour on weekdays.</p> <p>The FTC is not currently empowered to further limit advertising to children.</p>	<p>There are few policies or standards for food advertising aimed at children in the U.S.</p> <p>The 1990 Children's Television Act set limits on minutes of advertising to children.</p>
<p>Adults can help children resist TV food advertising.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get informed by watching children's TV programs. • Take some time to watch TV with young children. Talk about advertising techniques used to sell products. • Go to a grocery store and help children read labels for advertised foods. Is sugar or fat the first ingredient? 	<p>Adults can help children resist food advertising.</p> <p><i>Refer participants to the television food ad log in the handout.</i></p>
<p>Talk about it...</p> <p>What other actions could grandparents take to reduce the impact of television on children's weight?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a good example. • Choose when the TV is on. • Turn off the TV during meals with children. • Encourage physical activity. • Inform families about the impact of television on children (including their weight). • Support Turn Off the TV Week. • Get involved in making public policy to reduce or regulate food advertising targeted to children. 	<p><i>Lead discussion.</i></p> <p><i>Review suggested actions in the participant handout.</i></p>

<p>Our own television viewing behavior is a good starting point for making changes.</p>	<p><i>If time permits, ask participants to complete the self-assessment quiz in the participant handout. (Suggest that they do this at home if time is limited.)</i></p>
<p>FCE members have opportunities to take action to reduce television viewing by children in their communities.</p> <p>Turn Off the TV Week is one an opportunity to inform families about the impact of television on children (including their weight). This event is held each April to encourage Americans to evaluate the role of television in their lives.</p> <p>Possible FCE activities might include planning an exhibit at a public place (such as the local library) and encouraging and supporting Turn Off the TV activities in schools.</p>	<p>FCE members have opportunities to act to reduce TV viewing by children in their communities.</p> <p>FCE could support Turn Off the TV week (April 25-May 1, 2005).</p> <p>FCE could plan an exhibit or support Turn Off the TV week activities in schools. <i>(Refer to “For more information” in the participant handout.)</i></p>
	<p><i>Determine whether your group is interested in supporting Turn Off the TV Week. If so, discuss possibilities and make assignments for taking action.</i></p> <p><i>Discuss what might be included in an exhibit for families (such as the American Association for Pediatrics television viewing recommendations for children; ways to reduce the impact of TV on children’s health; physical activity ideas for families to substitute for TV; tips for helping children resist food advertising)</i></p>
	<p><i>Refer participants to addresses for the media and “for more information” web sites in the handout.</i></p>
	<p><i>Distribute the lesson evaluation and informed consent letter. Read the informed consent letter aloud. (Consent forms are for participants to keep.) Ask participants to complete the evaluation form. Please return evaluations to the county Extension office.</i></p>

Developed by Carolyn Raab, Extension Foods and Nutrition Specialist and Patty Case, Family and Community Development faculty member, Klamath County; both of Oregon State University



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