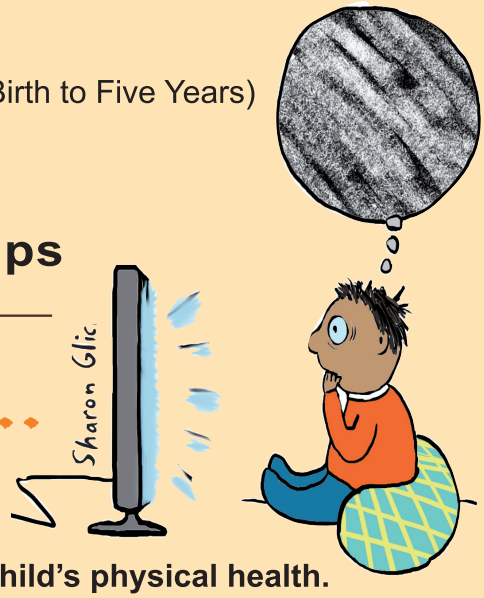
TAME THE TUBE!

Early Childhood (Birth to Five Years)

TV/Screen Time Facts, Guidelines, and Parent Tips



Did You Know?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

- **No screen time for children under age 2**
- **Limiting screen time to 1-2 hours of quality programming for children 2+ years old.**
- **No screen media in the bedroom**

And yet . . .

- On average, babies as young as 6 months to 3 years old spend nearly 2 hours a day with screen media (almost 20% of their waking hours).
- 40% of parents with young children report their family TVs are on "most" or "all" of the time.

Why It Matters...

Screen time in the early years affects a child's physical health.

- Children are inactive and often snack on high calorie, high fat, and/or salty foods when watching TV.
- Over the last 30 years, obesity rates have tripled for preschool children ages 2-5.
- The majority of obese children 5-10 years old already show signs of heart disease.
- Active free play helps young children develop imagination, creativity and problem solving ability – all of which lead to positive, health-promoting, lifelong skills.

Screen time in the early years affects a child's chances for success in school.

- Healthy brain development, in very young children, depends on emotionally positive, live interactions with adults, other children, and their surroundings.
- Screen media is not live, nor is it interactive. Therefore, brain development can be hindered by screen media.
- Children who watch a lot of TV and videos have weaker language skills than children who do not watch TV or whose screen time is limited.
- Young children's vocabularies and other language skills – which strongly predict school success – develop from hearing words spoken and read directly to them daily.
- Background TV (having the TV on even when no one is watching) can interfere with free play time, quality time with family, strong language development and sleep quality – all of which predict success with learning.

In addition, some children exposed to media violence (including cartoons) at an early age are at high risk for anti-social behaviors (especially boys), attention problems, and the use of violence to solve problems.

"Screen time" = TV, videos, video games, computer use, DVDs etc.

TAME THE TUBE!

What to Do!

Tips for parents:

Increase play and family time

- Make sure your child engages in active play – every day, both indoors and outside.
- Use meal time – car time, bath time, getting dressed time – to talk together about the day's events; what is happening in your family and community; what you're thinking and how you're feeling; and what you're hoping and dreaming.
- Create low-tech activities and experiences, such as playing with blocks; exploring nature and the out-of-doors; tasting new healthy foods; playing make-believe; talking, listening, and watching faces; and telling stories and sharing books.

Decrease screen time

- Turn the TV off during family meals.
- Avoid having the TV on as background noise at any time (it makes it hard to talk and focus on each other.)
- Watch carefully selected programs with your older preschooler. Three-to-5-year olds can learn from high-quality educational TV or videos, especially when parents or caregivers are there to talk with children about what they are seeing.
- Follow the advice of The American Academy of Pediatrics:
  - For healthy physical and mental development of your baby or toddler, do not use TV or videos.
  - For healthy physical and mental development of your child 2+ years old, limit screen time to 1-2 hours of quality programming.
- Be a good role model. Limit your own screen use. Your children pick-up both good and bad habits from you.

"Scientists have so far come up with nothing to suggest that babies are better off watching a baby video than, say, watching Dad fold laundry."

Into the Minds of Babes: How Screen Time Affects Children From Birth to Age Five by Lisa Guernsey

*This flyer was developed by the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program with the help of many sources. These sources and many other resources and tips for families can be found on our website at www.montananapa.org.

For questions please contact Cathy Costakis at (406) 994-5734 or e-mail her at costakis@montana.edu.

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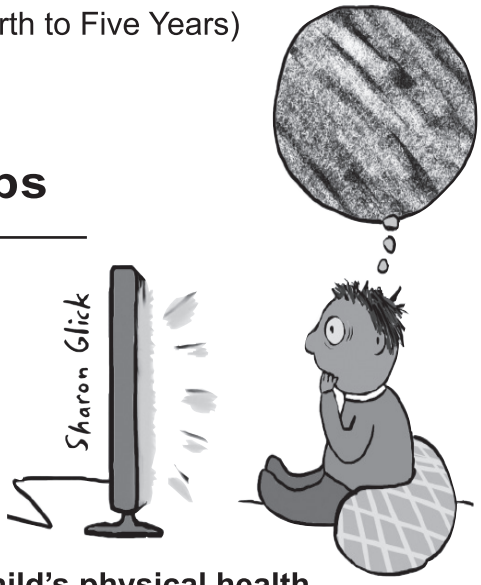

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