

REDUCING YOUNG CHILDREN'S TELEVISION AND ELECTRONIC GAMES TIME

The time children spend sitting and watching television or playing electronic games (known as 'screen-time') is time children could spend being active. We know from research that Australian children are spending too much time being sedentary and not enough time being active. This can lead to health problems now and in the future.



The Australian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that children aged 2 – 5 years should not spend more than **one hour a day** watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs computer and other electronic games). The guidelines also state that children less than 2 years of age should spend **no time** in these activities. Screen-based activities for children under two years have not been shown to lead to any improvements in health, intelligence or language development.

Tips for parents to reduce children's 'small-screen' time

- **Set limits on your child's TV watching and time spent playing electronic/computer games** – monitor how much screen-time your child engages in. You may be surprised at how many hours it actually is! Decide on a time limit, communicate this to your child and stick to it.
- **Designate certain days of the week as 'screen-free' days** – it's good for children to have one or more days during the week when there is no TV or computer games allowed. You may need to suggest active indoor and outdoor alternatives for your child to occupy them on these days.
- **Leave the TV off** – only have the TV on when it's being watched, otherwise turn it off and use music for 'background noise'.
- **Eat at the table and leave the TV off** – try to eat at the table as a family, not in front of the TV.
- **Be selective about what your child watches** – most children will happily sit and watch whatever is on the screen for hours on end if allowed to do so. Be selective. Use your child's allocated screen-time to watch quality children's programs they enjoy. You might want to record your child's favourite programs so that they can be viewed at a time that suits you better.
- **Keep TV's and computers out of your child's bedroom** – keep these in a common area of the house so that you can monitor use.
- **Be an active role model** – monitor your own small-screen time and physical activity and make sure you are leading by example. Allow time to be active with your child.

