



TV NATION

HOW TELEVISION CAN HARM YOUR HEALTH



MORE THAN FOUR HOURS A DAY: that's how much television Americans watch on average. Watching TV is our most popular pastime, and it seems that we spend about as much time talking about it as we do watching. But what we don't talk about so much is how all that time in front of the television affects us as individuals and as a society.

As an abundance of evidence makes clear, our television habit has serious negative consequences. Excessive TV-watching cuts into family time, harms our kids' ability to read and perform well in school, encourages violence, and it can wreck your health.

TV Promotes Sedentary Lifestyles and Obesity

Americans, by and large, do not get enough physical exercise. We spend most of our free time watching television, which promotes obesity and its related illnesses. According to Dr. William Dietz, Director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control, "The easiest way to reduce inactivity is to turn off the TV set. Almost anything else uses more energy than watching TV."

The Prevalence Of Obesity Among Adults and Children is Increasing

The Centers for Disease Control report that 27 percent of adults are obese nationwide and that obesity and its attendant health risks account for an estimated 300,000 deaths a year. The proportion of young children who are obese jumped from just over 4 percent in 1965 to over 15 percent in 2003. Childhood obesity is a leading factor in the unprecedented rise of Type II ("adult-onset") diabetes among adolescents.

What's more, sedentary children risk suffering from other ailments later in life, including chronic pain, heart disease, dizziness, and migraines— as Pete Egoscue has put it, "Children whose movements are limited because they're spending their time in front of computers or televisions . . . are at risk of never fulfilling their potential."

TV-Turnoff Tips

- Move your television to a less prominent location.
- Keep the TV off during meals.
- Designate certain days of the week as TV-free days.
- Do not use television as a reward.
- Listen to music or the radio for background noise.
- Cancel your cable subscription and use the money for books.
- Don't worry if children claim to be bored. Boredom passes and often leads to creativity.

