



At Your Service

Fall 2003

Food news you can use from Child Nutrition Program, Inc.

Taming the TV Monster

Too much TV is hazardous to children's health. Children who watch TV have a greater risk of obesity. Also, children who watch 4 or more hours of TV per day spend less time on school work, have poorer reading skills, play less well with friends, and have fewer hobbies than children who watch less TV. These conclusions are based on studies done by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association and others.

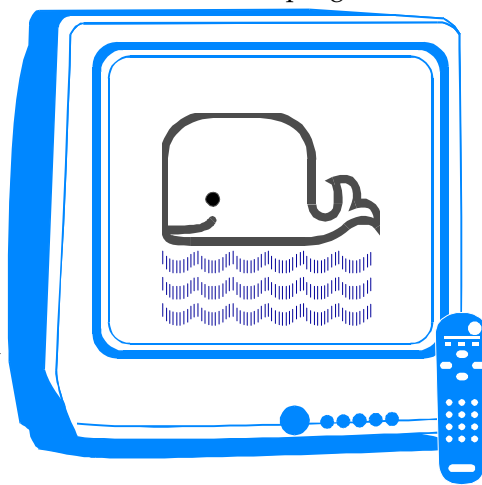
Let's take a look at how TV harms children. First of all, when children are watching TV, they are not doing other things that exercise their bodies and their minds. And not only are our "couch potato" children not burning calories, all too often they are mindlessly munching away at foods with little nutritional value. Each year, most children spend about 1500 hours in front of the TV compared to 900 hours in the classroom. It's not too hard to see how obesity can become a problem for regular TV-viewers.

Commercials can be especially harmful to children. For one thing, children younger than 6 do not understand that the purpose of advertising is to sell a product. So they are more likely to accept the information in commercials as true. Many of the commercials directed at children are for sugary cereals, candy, salty snacks, fatty fast foods, and other food with little nutritional value. TV commercials teach children that these unhealthy foods are the foods they should want to eat. TV messages are powerful and a lot more interesting to children than you telling them to eat their vegetables. TV commercials lead children into temptation, and once they are there, it can be very hard to lead them back out again.

The answer is NOT to take TV away from children. In fact, it's best not to set a daily "allowance" of TV,

although more than two hours a day is too much. Instead, decide what programs the children will watch, and when a particular show is over, turn the TV off. Children will then get in the habit of watching "programs" instead of watching "TV" continuously.

Especially for younger children, choose calm, quiet programs. Slower-paced viewing gives children time to think and absorb. Simple programs that inspire children to make sounds, say words, sing and dance are ideal. If you have a VCR, you may want to tape the shows that are best for children and watch those shows instead of whatever show happens to be on at a particular time.



Whenever possible, watch TV with the children. When you watch with the children, you can talk about what is going on. You can point out the way commercials glamourize

products and talk about whether the message is realistic or not. In this way you can teach children to be critical viewers who do not automatically accept every message that TV delivers.

And as always, it is important for you to set a good example. So don't channel surf or keep the TV on as background noise. If children see you sitting down every so often to watch a particular show, they will learn that TV can be a healthy source of entertainment without becoming addictive.

TV is a very powerful part of our culture, and in many ways it can act like a drug, by sedating us and messing with our minds and bodies. Teach children not to become addicts, by teaching them self-control and to make good choices. If children can learn to make good choices about TV-watching, they will be better prepared to make good choices in other areas of their lives as well.

Important Infant Feeding Information

Water alone is not appropriate for feeding young infants (from 0 to 4 months). The young infant's kidneys can not process water alone. Too much water can damage internal organs and possibly lead to death.



Water can be added gradually when an infant turns 4 months old and is starting to eat solid foods. Two to three ounces of water daily should pose minimal risk to a healthy full term infant. Water can be gradually increased as the infant gets older. Never force an infant to drink water, and never replace a formula or breast milk feeding with water.

Child care providers are required to offer a minimum of one type of infant formula. The formula must be fortified with iron. Low iron formulas are only reimbursable if we have a medical statement on file from the infant's health care provider.

Iron-fortified formulas are essential to normal brain development and physical growth. Low iron formulas should only be used for infants suffering from major blood diseases called hemoglobinopathies. Call your food program consultant or our office for a list of approvable formulas.

Pumpkin Squares

2 cups cooked pumpkin
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground ginger



1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 gallon lowfat vanilla frozen yogurt
4 dozen gingersnaps

1. Combine pumpkin, sugar, and spices in a medium-large bowl; stir in yogurt.
2. Line bottom of 9-by-13-by 2 inch pan with gingersnaps. Pour half of pumpkin mixture over gingersnaps. Repeat layers and freeze.
3. To serve, remove from freezer, let set at room temperature for 5 minutes, and cut into squares. Makes 18 servings.

Pumpkin Squares would count a 1 bread component.

Scavenger Hunt

Enjoy the fresh air and beauty of the world on a nice fall day. A scavenger hunt is a good way to help children learn to observe and think about the world around them. You may wish to pair older and younger children on the hunt. Give each child or group of children an egg carton or empty bag to collect items, and a small notebook to record their observations in words or by drawing pictures.

Color/Shape: Have each child collect objects of a specific color or shape. For example, one child may collect objects that are green, while another collects objects that are brown. A child may collect round or curved objects, while another collects straight or square objects.

Noise: Have children search for objects that make noise. Examples include a bird, squirrel, a crunchy leaf, a breaking twig...

Smell: Have children search for items that smell. Examples include flowers, freshly mowed grass, rain, rotting leaves, some kinds of plants...

Animals/Plants: Have children search for creatures like birds, squirrels, insects, and butterflies. Also look for signs of animals like tracks, holes and bird nests. Look for plants with interesting leaves, seeds, seed pods and nuts, different types of grasses, fall flowers...

Watching: Give the children a list of items to observe and draw. Examples include a cloud, bird, squirrel, sun, tree, flower, car truck, rain puddle, bird nest...

Concepts: Have children search for opposites such a short/long or light/dark. Or have them search for items that begin with a certain letter such as "T"- tree, twig, tulip...

When you return home, set up a discovery table so that children can observe each other's "finds". Measure the items or weigh them. Glue them on paper in a collage.

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