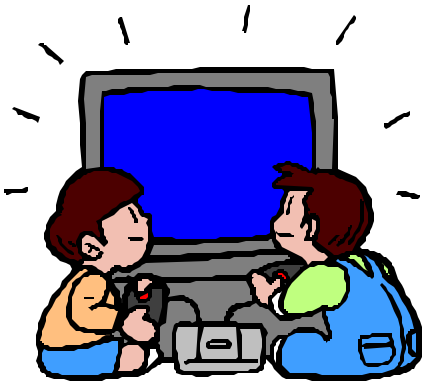


WIC LINES

An Information Source For Healthy WIC Families

August/September 2002

12 Tips to Tame the Tube*



1. AVOID USING TV AS A BABYSITTER. Think of how careful you are about choosing a baby-sitter and day care. Try to be just as careful about what your children watch on TV every day.

2. KNOW WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE WATCHING. It is important to be aware of program content as well as the content of the daily news. The younger the child, the more impressionable he or she is, and the less experienced in evaluating content against the values of family and community. Additionally, emotional images may intrude upon and interrupt sleep.

3. KEEP TV OUT OF KIDS' BEDROOMS. It is difficult to monitor what your children are watching when they are watching TV in their own room. Having a TV in a child's room discourages participation in family activities and encourages them to watch TV when they could be studying, reading, or sleeping.

4. SET SOME GUIDELINES ABOUT WHEN AND WHAT

CHILDREN WATCH. This can be done in conversation with your children, but the final call belongs to the adults. The clearer the rules (i.e., no TV before school, or until homework is completed, etc.), the better. Setting new limits may be upsetting to your children at first, but consistency is very important.

5. PRACTICE "APPOINTMENT" TV. DECIDE IN ADVANCE WHAT'S GOOD AND WATCH IT



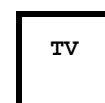
AS A FAMILY. Go through the TV guide in the paper on Sunday and make family decisions on shows to watch for the week. Discuss reasons for the decisions with your children. If in doubt, get more information. In choosing TV shows or videos, make use of independent evaluations, like KidScore, TV and movie guides, articles in magazines, etc. Discuss issues and ideas with other adults, friends, and parents of your children's playmates.

6. TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT WHAT HE OR SHE IS WATCHING. Discuss what you are

watching and ask specific questions. Ask what they see, as it may be very different from what you see. Ask them to tell you what things mean to them. Ask them why they watch specific shows, what characters they like and don't like. Discuss the commercials and their perception of toys, cereals, etc. and the people who sell them.

7. TURN TV OFF DURING MEALS. Catch up with one another. Focus on each other. Share stories and activities from each family member's day.

8. USE THE VCR TO YOUR ADVANTAGE. Tape a good show and schedule a special family viewing -- complete with popcorn. If a show is on at an inconvenient time such as meal time, homework time, or family time, tape it to watch later.

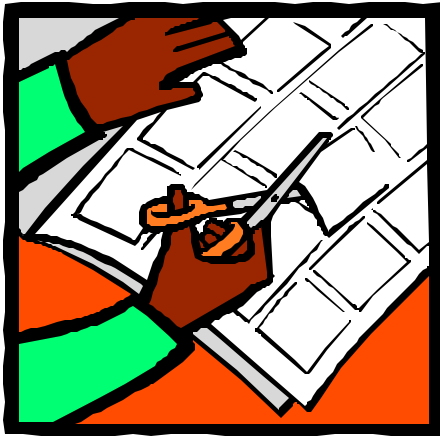


9. PUT THE FAMILY ON A TV DIET.

Schedule some fun alternative activities.

When you do watch television, watch it with your children.





10. CREATE A TV COUPON SYSTEM. Kids get coupons and turn them in when they watch a program. Unused coupons can be "cashed in" for a special family activity.

11. DON'T MAKE TV THE FOCAL POINT OF THE ROOM. Make your children the focus of your attention, not the TV. Research shows that people watch less TV if it is not in the most prominent location in the room.

12. PATRONIZE GOOD PROGRAMS AND DEMAND MORE OF THEM. Express your opinions to TV and radio stations, network executives, and advertisers. Tell them not only what you do not like, but also what you like. Addresses for networks and local stations are in your TV guide. Also, remember that your money has a voice of its own.

*The fact sheet "12 Tips to Tame the Tube" was written by the National Institute on Media and the Family. For their free family resources MediaMeasure, TotSmart or KidScore go to: <http://www.mediaandthefamily.org/>

TV: When? How Much? Where? What kind? Who with? What to do instead?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) states:

- ' Parents should discourage television viewing for children younger than 2 years, and encourage more interactive activities that will promote proper brain development, such as talking, playing, singing, and reading together.
- ' Parents should limit their children's total media time (with entertainment media) to no more than 1 to 2 hours of quality programming per day.
- ' Parents should remove television sets from children's bedrooms.
- ' Parents should monitor the shows children and adolescents are viewing. Most programs should be informational, educational, and nonviolent.
- ' Parents should watch TV along with children, and discuss the content
- ' Parents should encourage alternative entertainment for children, including reading, athletics, hobbies, and creative play.

AAP's Media Matter's campaign materials can be found at: <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/mediamatters.htm>

More on Media Literacy

<http://www.ciconline.com/uploads/ParentGuide.pdf>

Download the parents guide: "Taking Charge of Your TV".

<http://www.pta.org/programs/view/ibr.htm>

The PTA's web library on media literacy.

<http://www.medialiteracy.com/parents/websitesforparents.pdf>

A list of media literacy websites for parents.

<http://www.cme.org/>

Website for the Center for Media Education.

<http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit>

A PBS media literacy site with areas for kids, parents and teachers.

<http://www.justthink.org/>

A media literacy site for teens.

<http://www.med.sc.edu/medialit>

A clearing house of media education materials. Designed for teachers but parents will benefit also.

<http://www.tvturnoff.org/>

A website that encourages watching much less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities.

<http://www.limitv.org/>

A website about TV's negative effects on children's development and education. It has good TV alternatives, though.