

“SCREEN” TIME CAN BE HARMFUL TO YOUR CHILDREN’S HEALTH

Screen time, or time spent watching TV or in front of a computer, has been linked with many harmful effects to our children’s health. Research shows the strongest predictor of childhood obesity is the number of hours spent watching TV, surfing the net or playing computer or video games. Other research has shown that:

- ◆ Children who watch more TV eat more calories and drink more pop.
- ◆ Children who watch TV eat more low-nutrient, high-calorie foods.
- ◆ Academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than 10 hours of TV a week.
- ◆ TV interferes with the development of intelligence, thinking and imagination skills.
- ◆ TV interferes with language development.
- ◆ TV impedes development of longer attention spans.
- ◆ Certain types of TV cultivate aggressive or violent behaviours.

It is recommended that children accumulate 90 minutes of physical activity every day in order to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and for proper gross and fine motor development.

Research shows that physical activity in three 10-minute sessions is just as effective as one 30-minute session. Health experts recommend parents assist their children to gradually increase physical activity and decrease TV time in 30 minute segments until they are being physically active for 90 minutes and watching no more than 2 hours of TV a day.

Encourage your children to be active by:

- ◆ Playing outdoor or indoor games.
- ◆ Being active as a family. Go for a walk or hike together every day before or after dinner.
- ◆ Taking advantage of after school programs.
- ◆ Finding an activity or sport they like to do. Sign up for a group that meets regularly at the local recreation centre.

For more information contact:

- ◆ www.activehealthykids.ca
- ◆ www.publichealth.gc.ca/paguide
- ◆ www.limitv.org