



A TV/Screen Reduction Tool for Use with Youth



CALIFORNIA OBESITY PREVENTION INITIATIVE  
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

DO MORE, WATCH LESS

“Do More, Watch Less” is a collaborative project of the Department of Health Services’ California Obesity Prevention Initiative and California Project LEAN; University of California, Berkeley, Center for Weight and Health; University of California, San Francisco; and the TV Turnoff Network. Funding was provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Cooperative Agreement 00099 and The California Endowment.



## DEAR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM STAFF:



**T**hank you for your participation in the *Do More, Watch Less* project. We are excited about the opportunity to work with you on a cutting edge effort to help youth incorporate more screen-free activities into their free time while reducing the time they spend on screen-based activities such as watching TV, surfing the internet, and playing video games.

Health officials have become increasingly alarmed by the rapid increase in obesity among American youth. One promising, small step in the effort to address this growing problem is the reduction of TV viewing and computer and video game use. Youth today spend more time in front of the TV, video and computer than they spend on anything else besides sleeping.

Doctors, child development experts and researchers believe that screen-based activities may contribute to youth obesity in one or more of the following ways:<sup>1</sup>

- The time youth spend in front of the screen displaces time they could spend being physically active.
- The food advertisements youth are exposed to on TV influence them to make unhealthy food choices.
- Youth snack excessively while in front of the screen and they eat less healthy meals when eating in front of the TV.
- Watching TV and videos lowers the metabolic rates of youth below any other waking activity.

Over the course of this project, youth will be given the chance to track their time spent on screen-based activities like watching TV, surfing the internet, and playing video games. They will then be challenged to cut out screen-based activities for three days and instead do fun screen-free activities. Following that, they will be challenged to spend no more than 2 hours a day in front of the screen. Doctors recommend no more than 2 hours in front of the screen a day.

As you undertake this project, please know that an enthusiastic attitude can help youth be successful in their efforts to go screen-free. Please also consider other ways your organization can support this effort. Does your program have a policy that includes setting limits on how much time youth spend using computers for non-homework related use? What is your policy for watching TV or videos? If your organization does not have policies that address these issues, we encourage you to consider adopting such a policy. We would gladly discuss this with you in further detail and provide you with resources.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the health of California's youth.

Sincerely,

**Nancy Gelbard, MS, RD**

CHIEF

*California Obesity Prevention Initiative*

<sup>1</sup> *Issue Brief: The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity.* (February 2004) The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

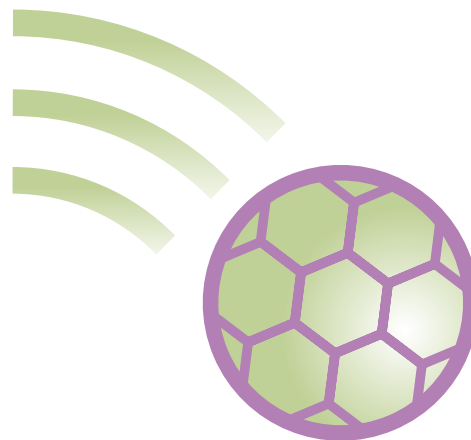


## RECOMMENDED TIMELINE

*Do More, Watch Less* was developed with flexibility in mind so that the entire project could be completed within 2-1/2 weeks to a month, depending on the time you have available. Below is an example of the recommended timeframe for this project.

<b>Introduction</b> ( <i>Track Screen Time</i> )	Day 1
<b>SESSION 1</b> ( <i>Track Screen Time</i> )	*4-7 days later
<b>SESSION 2</b> ( <i>Total Screen-Free Challenge</i> )	*4-7 days after Session 1
<b>SESSION 3</b> ( <i>2-Hour Daily Screen Time Max.</i> )	*4-7 days after Session 2
<b>SESSION 4</b> ( <i>Wrap-Up &amp; Celebration</i> )	*4-7 days after Session 3

\*Please check the calendar before setting the next group session in order to allow enough time for youth to track their screen time on two weekdays and one Saturday and Sunday. For example, if the **Introduction** is presented on a Monday, the earliest you can hold **Session I** will be seven days later as this project asks youth to track screen time on two weekdays and one Saturday or Sunday. This time span will allow youth to track their screen time to include one weekend day.





DO MORE, WATCH LESS



## ACTIVITY STEPS WITH YOUTH

### BACKGROUND

This introduction asks youth to track the time they spend on screen-based activities before they know the overall goal of this project.

### OBJECTIVES

#### Youth Will:

- Track their screen-based activities, such as watching TV, surfing the internet, and playing video games over a three-day period.

### TIME NEEDED

20–30 minutes

### GETTING READY

#### Duplicate:

- *Screen Time Tracking Form and Example*
- *Optional but recommended:*
  - *Letter for Parent/Guardian*
  - *TV Fact Sheet for Parent/Guardian*
  - *Consent Form for Parent/Guardian*

#### Review:

- *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### Have:

- *Optional but recommended:* Secure small prizes for youth who bring back their completed *Screen Time Tracking Form* to Session I.

1. Tell the youth that you've got an exciting project for them over the next few weeks. Tell them you're not going to give them the details of the project until later, but for now, they can begin the project by tracking their screen time—time they spend watching TV, surfing the internet, and playing video games. (Note to facilitator: There is no need to provide further details on this project until you meet for Session 1.)

2. Hand-out the *Screen Time Tracking Form and Example* and review with students. Explain that you're asking them to track their screen-based activities (involving the TV, computer or video games) on just three days. Two of those days will be on a weekday (Monday through Friday) and one of those days will be over the weekend (Saturday or Sunday).

3. Explain that as they track their screen-based activities, they should round up to the nearest half hour (e.g., 1-1/2 hours. See *Example*). Tell them you would like them to fill the form out as they do a screen-based activity and that they can make tally marks on the form to track their screen time. At the end of the day, the youth can add up their tally marks to come up with their totals. Tell youth they will not be judged on their hours of screen time. Note that it's important to fill the form out honestly.

4. Review the *Screen Time Tracking Form and Example* with the group to show how to determine the **Daily Total Screen Time** and the **Average Daily Time Spent on Screen-Based Activities**. (See the form and example for an explanation.) Ask the youth if they have any questions about their assignment.

5. Ask youth to return their completed forms on the date you will meet for Session 1, from four to seven days after the *Introduction*. (Please check the calendar before setting the date for Session I in order to allow enough time for youth to track their screen time on two weekdays and one Saturday or Sunday.)

Continued on next page

DO MORE, WATCH LESS



**6.** Over the next few days, remind students to complete their *Screen Time Tracking Form*.

**7.** *Optional but recommended:* Tell youth that those who bring back their completed *Screen Time Tracking Form* by the deadline will receive a prize (e.g., a CD, gift certificate, sporting equipment). (Note: The State Health Department discourages the use of food, especially candy, as rewards or incentives.) Make sure to have prizes available by the next time you meet.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**1. Do we count time spent on the phone?**

No.

**2. What about downloading music, do we count that?**

If you are sitting in front of the computer screen, yes, that counts. If you walk away and do something else while it downloads, no it doesn't.

**3. What if you don't spend any time on an activity such as watching TV?**

Then place a zero in the box of the *Screen Time Tracking Form*.

**4. What if the TV is on while I'm doing something else? Does that count?**

Yes, if you are in front of the TV it counts.

**5. What if I watch educational TV? Does that count?**

Yes, that counts.



## SCREEN TIME TRACKING FORM

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTICIPANT NAME:

\_\_\_\_\_  
START DATE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
THREE DAY TOTAL:

\_\_\_\_\_  
AVERAGE DAILY TIME  
SPENT ON SCREEN-  
BASED ACTIVITIES:

### Instructions

1. Select 3 days to track your screen time: 2 weekdays and 1 weekend day.
2. When logging your screen time, round up to the nearest half hour using the following: 1 = 1 hour and 1/2 = 30 minutes. (For example, if on one day you watch TV for 10 minutes, walk away and do something else for a while, and then later that day you watch TV for an hour, your daily total would be 1 hour since you would round to the nearest half hour-below.) To get your **Daily Total Screen Time**, add the **TV Screen Time** for the day to the **Computer Time** number.
3. To figure out the **Three Day Total**, add all three numbers in the **Daily Total Screen Time** column. Note the total hours and minutes, and round up or down to the nearest half hour.
4. To figure the **Average Daily Time Spent on Screen-Based Activities**, take the three-day total and divide by three to get your daily average. (For example, if you had 15 total hours over three days, you'd divide by 3 to get an average of 5 hours a day. If your daily average does not come out evenly (e.g., 4.7), round up to the next highest number (e.g., 5). (See example on next page)

Day of the Week	TV Screen Time	Computer Time	Daily Total Screen Time
	<i>(Includes TV, VCR, DVD &amp; video games)</i>	<i>(Does not include homework-related use)</i>	<i>(Add daily totals for TV &amp; computer time)</i>
<b>First Weekday</b> <i>(Mon. through Fri.)</i> _____ Day/Date			
<b>Second Weekday</b> <i>(Mon. through Fri.)</i> _____ Day/Date			
<b>Weekend</b> <i>(Sat. or Sun.)</i> _____ Day/Date			



## SCREEN TIME TRACKING FORM

*Example*

PARTICIPANT NAME:

**Jane Doe**

START DATE:

**June 25, 2004**

THREE DAY TOTAL:

**8 + 6 + 12 = 26 hours**

AVERAGE DAILY TIME  
SPENT ON SCREEN-  
BASED ACTIVITIES:

**$26 \div 3 = 8.6$  hours**

*Round up 8.6 to 9*

Day of the Week	TV Screen Time	Computer Time	Daily Total Screen Time
	<i>(Includes TV, VCR, DVD &amp; video games)</i>	<i>(Does not include homework-related use)</i>	<i>(Add daily totals for TV &amp; computer time)</i>
<b>First Weekday</b> <i>(Mon. through Fri.)</i> Friday 6/25/04 Day/Date	4-1/2	3-1/2	8 hours
<b>Second Weekday</b> <i>(Mon. through Fri.)</i> Tuesday 6/29/04 Day/Date	3	3	6 hours
<b>Weekend</b> <i>(Sat. or Sun.)</i> Sunday 6/27/04 Day/Date	10	2	12 hours





## LETTER FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

DEAR PARENT/GUARDIAN:

Over the next few weeks, all youth in our after school program are invited to participate in the *Do More, Watch Less!* project developed by the California Department of Health Services. The project aims to improve the health of youth by challenging them to spend less time in front of the screen (TV, computer, and video) and more time doing fun screen-free activities. Doctors and child development experts believe that TV, computers and video games may contribute to youth obesity because:<sup>1</sup>

- The time youth spend in front of the screen takes away from the time they could be physically active.
- The food advertisements youth are exposed to on TV influence them to make unhealthy food choices.
- Youth snack excessively while in front of the screen and they eat less healthy meals when eating in front of the TV.

Throughout the project, youth will be asked to track their time in front of the screen (TV, computer, and video). Youth will be asked to give up all screen-based activities (except for homework assignments) for a period of time and instead will be encouraged to do screen-free activities. **Your support is very important.** Early adolescents still view parents as an important source of information. You may even want to reduce your time in front of the screen in an effort to support your child in this effort.

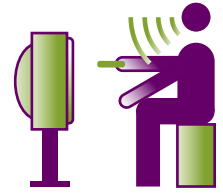
Sincerely,

After School Program Staff



<sup>1</sup> Issue Brief: *The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity*. (February 2004) The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

## TV FACT SHEET FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN



### DID YOU KNOW?

The average American youth spends more time watching TV than any other activity except for sleeping.

TV negatively affects children's food choices and their physical activity levels.

Youth who watch TV at mealtimes eat far fewer fruits and vegetables.

### Reasons to Cut Down on TV Viewing

- More than 1–2 hours/day of TV watching has been consistently associated with a decreased interest in school activities and lower academic scores.
- The more youth watch TV, the more likely they are to snack between meals, eat the junk foods they see advertised on TV, and attempt to influence their parents' food purchases.
- Youth exposed to TV violence increasingly accept the use of violence to solve problems.

### Things Parents Can Do

- Limit your children's use of TV, video and computers to no more than 2 hours a day—the maximum amount that doctors recommend.
- Eat meals as a family and keep the TV off during meals.
- Remove the TV set from your child's bedroom.
- Do not use watching TV as a reward.



## CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN



RETURN FORM TO:

I give permission for my son/daughter to participate in *Do More, Watch Less*. \* I realize that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue his/her participation at any time without penalty.

NAME OF YOUTH (PLEASE PRINT)

BY (DATE):

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN (PLEASE PRINT)

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

\* See attached letter for description





DO MORE, WATCH LESS

## ACTIVITY STEPS WITH YOUTH



### BACKGROUND

On average, American youth spend more time watching TV than they spend in school. This session provides youth with an overview of the *Do More, Watch Less!* project. It also provides them with an opportunity to identify screen-free ways they would like to spend their free time while at home or in their neighborhood.

### OBJECTIVES

#### Youth Will:

- Identify screen-free activities they would like to do during their free time.
- Understand the purpose of the *Do More, Watch Less!* project.
- Discuss the negative side effects of watching TV and other screen-based activities.

### TIME NEEDED

30 minutes

### GETTING READY

#### Duplicate:

- *Facts & Figures for Youth*
- *Screen Time Tracking Form*
- *Optional: Group Ground Rules*

#### Have:

- Markers and a flip chart
- *Optional but recommended:* Prizes for students who completed their *Screen Time Tracking Form*

1. Ask the youth, “How do you *typically* spend your free time? What do you do?” Have a volunteer record the activities on the flipchart. Note that there are no wrong answers. *Optional:* Review *Group Ground Rules* prior to discussion.
2. Ask the youth, “If you didn’t have electronic games (e.g. Play Station, Gameboy), computer or TV, how would you like to spend your free time around home or in your neighborhood?” Ask for a volunteer to record the ideas on the flipchart. (*Keep this list as you will need it again during Session II.*)
3. Ask the youth, “Do you feel that you’re in school a lot? Did you know that the average American youth spends more time watching TV than any other activity except for sleeping? They even spend more time watching TV than they spend in school.” (Note: These estimates average out the time that youth spend watching TV, including summer vacation.)
4. Tell the youth that over the next few weeks, they are going to be involved in a project called *Do More, Watch Less!* Explain that this project is basically about their free time and how they’d *like* to spend it. Add that during this project, they will explore how they spend their free time and be challenged to think of “screen-free” ways to spend their free time. Define “screen-free” activities as those that do not include the TV, computer, or video games. Note that use of the computer for homework is OK!
5. At the end of this project, note that they will have a party to celebrate their efforts. Ask them what they would like to do at this party (within reason). Record the ideas.

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DO MORE, WATCH LESS



6. Ask the youth why they think there is concern about too much TV watching and time spent on computers and video games. After some general comments from youth, distribute the *Facts & Figures for Youth* handout. Ask for volunteers to read a few of the facts and then discuss the facts together as a group. Ask the youth to share what they learned with their parents.

7. Ask the youth if they completed their *Screen Time Tracking Form*. If not, tell them they've got one more chance to do it. Tell the youth to complete the form before you meet for Session II. (Please check the calendar before setting the date for Session II in order to allow enough time for youth to track their screen time on two weekdays and one Saturday or Sunday. You'll need from four to seven days before scheduling Session II.) Share the date of your next session.

8. *Optional but recommended:* Note that if they complete their *Screen Time Tracking Form*, they will receive a prize. Provide a prize to those who completed their forms and record their names. Note that the rest of them can also receive a prize if they complete their *Screen Time Tracking Form* by the date of your next session.

9. *Optional Activity:* Break youth into groups and ask them to use the *Facts & Figures for Youth* handout to write a commercial or advertisement for reducing screen time in order to make more free time to do other fun activities. (Youth who do this could share their commercial or advertisement during the Session IV party.)





## FACTS & FIGURES FOR YOUTH

- The average American youth spends more time watching TV than any other activity except for sleeping.
- Almost any other activity uses more energy than watching TV. There is no waking activity that people do that burns fewer calories than watching TV.
- Doctors recommend that youth spend no more than 2 hours a day in front of the TV, computer or video games. And less is even better!
- Studies have shown that when youth watch less TV, they are able to keep weight off.
- The typical youth sees 40,000 advertisements per year on TV alone.
- Most TV advertisements for youth try to sell junk food like fast food, sugared cereal, candy, and chips.
- Studies show the more TV youth watch, the more likely they are to snack between meals and eat foods advertised on TV.
- Many doctors believe that television, video, and computer use may contribute to obesity in children and youth.



Adapted from *Turn Off TV, Turn on a Healthier Lifestyle*, TV-Turnoff Network, [www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org), and *Issue Brief: The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity*. (February 2004) The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.



DO MORE, WATCH LESS



## ACTIVITY STEPS WITH YOUTH

### BACKGROUND

This session provides youth with a challenge to join millions of other people who have gone screen-free for up to a week and to do some of the screen-free activities they identified in Session I.

### OBJECTIVES

#### Youth Will:

- Try to do more screen-free activities.
- Brainstorm ways to work around the challenges of going screen-free.
- Engage in no screen-based activities for up to a week.

### TIME NEEDED

30 minutes

### GETTING READY

#### Duplicate:

- Copies of *Screen-Free Things to Do* handout.

#### Have:

- Markers and a flip chart
- The list of ways the youth said they would like to spend their free time from Session I. *Optional:* Make a copy of the list for students to take and use over the next week.
- *Optional but recommended:* Prizes for students who completed their *Screen Time Tracking Form* and have not yet received a prize.

1. Ask the youth to think about the time they spend in front of the screen—like watching TV, surfing the internet, and playing video games. Ask them why they typically do these activities. Ask for a volunteer to record on a flip chart their answers (e.g., bored, want background noise, interested in the activity, etc.). Ask youth when they typically do screen-based activities (before school, after school, at a friend's house, etc.). (Note—it is important for youth to know when and why they do a behavior in order to change it.)

2. Ask students to pull out their completed *Screen Time Tracking Form*. *Optional:* Give a prize to youth who completed their form and have not yet received a prize. (If not many youth completed the forms, ask youth to think back to yesterday and estimate how much time they spent in front of the TV or computer/video game screen. Ask youth to focus on the number of hours in front of the screen as opposed to discussing the shows watched.)

3. Ask the youth if they were surprised at the amount of TV they watched and video and computer activities they did.

4. Ask the youth if they recall what doctors recommend as the maximum amount of time each day to watch TV, use the computer, and play video games. Note that doctors recommend no more than 2 hours of TV and video use (combined) each day and less is even better! Ask youth for possible reasons for this recommendation.

5. Note that you are challenging them to go screen-free (give up TV, computer- and video-based activities) for three to seven days. The only exception is if they need the computer for homework assignments. Note that throughout the nation, millions of youth have met this challenge through participation in *TV Turn-Off Week*.

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6. Note that you are challenging them to go screen-free so they can do some of the activities they listed in Session 1. Pull out the flip chart list from Session 1 that highlights screen-free ways they would like to spend their free time. Review their ideas and the *Screen-Free Things to Do* handout. Have youth select things to do instead of using the screen and list on the *Screen-Free Things to Do* handout.

7. Ask youth to imagine they are trying not to watch TV or spend time on the computer or video games. Ask them how they will do this in the following situations. For instance:

- “What if you come home from school after having a disagreement with your best friend and you just want a distraction? What are you going to do?” (Possible tips: Think of a distraction that is not screen-based like reading a book or magazine, writing your friend a letter, or listening to music and dancing.)
- Or, “what if you come home and your parents or brother or sister have the TV on, what are you going to do?” (Possible tips: Invite your parents or brother or sister to do something else with you like play a board game or a card game; go outside and do something like shoot some hoops.)
- Or, “imagine that you go home and you’re not watching TV or you’re not in front of the computer or video screen. What would you be doing instead? What would make that happen more often?”

8. *Optional:* Break-up into teams and have each team make a list of screen-free activities they will do and ways to support each other during the challenge. Encourage teams to do some of the fun screen-free activities together. If desired, have teams compete for the lowest amount of screen time. (You may want to offer a prize for the winning team).

9. Over the next few days, remind youth that the screen-free challenge is their chance to do some of the fun screen-free activities they would like to do.



## SCREEN-FREE THINGS TO DO

*Highlight or Circle the Activities that Interest You.*

1. Call a friend
2. Listen to your favorite music
3. Discover activities in your community center or local park
4. Workout
5. Play soccer, softball, volleyball or basketball
6. Go for a walk or run
7. Draw and/or paint a picture or mural
8. Play dodge ball
9. Take up a musical instrument
10. Practice a sport
11. Organize a game of touch football or baseball in the local park
12. Learn to change the oil or a tire on a car
13. Create a skit and perform it for others
14. Play cards
15. Make a necklace or other jewelry out of beads
16. Make crafts to give as gifts
17. Write a story
18. Watch the night sky through binoculars: identify different constellations. Observe the moon.
19. Build a model car, boat or plane
20. Write a song/rap
21. Ride your bike
22. Sing and dance to your favorite music
23. Read a good book or magazine
24. Take photographs and organize them into an album
25. Make a scrap book

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## SCREEN-FREE THINGS TO DO



*Highlight or Circle the Activities that Interest You.*

26. Make a collage of your favorite things out of pictures from old magazines
27. Jump rope
28. Hula Hoop
29. Write in your diary
30. Take a dance class, make a routine to teach your friends
31. Repair or refinish a piece of furniture
32. Create art out of clay, metals, or even junk
33. Paint your nails
34. Play Frisbee with a neighbor or friend
35. Play with your pet
36. Spend time with a brother or sister
37. Create an advertisement that encourages kids your age to cut their screen time (TV, computer, video game use)
38. Redecorate your room (with your parent's permission, of course!)
39. Experiment with a new look (hair, clothes, make-up)
40. Do a crossword puzzle
41. Make a friendship bracelet
42. Take a nature hike. Learn about native trees, flowers, and animals in your area.
43. Write a poem
44. Learn a magic trick and practice it
45. Learn to juggle
46. Volunteer to help in your community
47. Learn or make-up a game and teach your friends
48. Plant and/or work in the garden
49. Make a wooden flowerbox

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DO MORE, WATCH LESS



## SCREEN-FREE THINGS TO DO

*Highlight or Circle the Activities that Interest You.*

50. Learn to sew and make something
51. Go roller skating, skate boarding, roller blading or ice skating
52. Go swimming
53. Plan a slumber party
54. Play hopscotch, hide and seek, or freeze-tag
55. Write cards or letters to friends and family you don't see often
56. Learn and practice knitting or crocheting
57. Walk the dog (with a friend or family member)
58. Tutor a friend or family member on their homework
59. Go to a museum
60. Play a board game, chess or checkers with friends or family members
61. Research your family history and draw a family tree
62. Plan and cook dinner with friends or family
63. Go bowling
64. Create sidewalk art with chalk
65. Go camping or build a fort in your living room or backyard
66. \_\_\_\_\_ *(write in your idea)*
67. \_\_\_\_\_ *(write in your idea)*
68. \_\_\_\_\_ *(write in your idea)*

*Now choose three screen-free activities you would like to do during your free-time using the suggestions above and your own ideas:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



DO MORE, WATCH LESS

## ACTIVITY STEPS WITH YOUTH



### BACKGROUND

Starting a new habit takes time and dedication. It's often helpful to enlist the support of peers. This session allows youth to discuss their experiences during the screen-free challenge. Youth will again be challenged to reduce their screen-based activities, but this time it's with the goal of no more than 2 hours a day.

### OBJECTIVES

#### Youth Will:

- Share their experiences during the screen-free challenge.
- Discuss what screen-free activities they did.
- Try to reduce their screen-based activities to no more than 2 hours a day over the next few days.

### TIME NEEDED

30 minutes

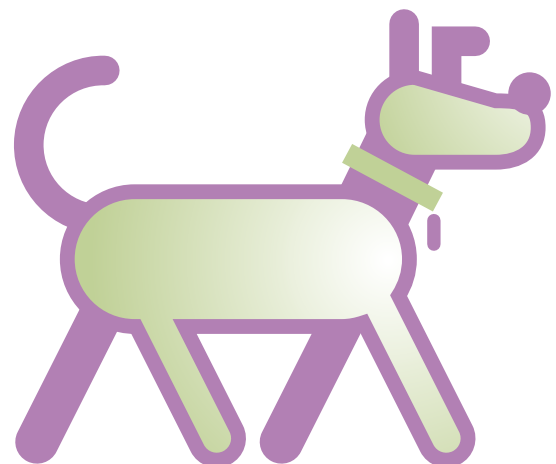
### GETTING READY

#### Duplicate:

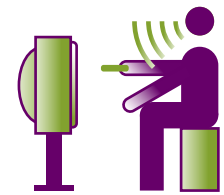
- *Screen-Free Things to Do*
- *Screen Time Tracking Form*

1. Ask youth to discuss the positive effects of spending just a little bit of time in front of the screen (TV, computer, video games) instead of a lot of time in front of the screen.
2. Ask the youth to describe their experiences during the screen-free challenge. Ask youth to describe what types of screen-free activities they did during the screen-free challenge and what they thought of the activities. Tell the students you applaud their efforts whether they were able to go totally screen-free or not.
3. Ask youth whether they think it will be easier to do no more than 2 hours of screen time a day since they have already tried to go totally screen-free for at least three days. (Note: It's helpful to the youth if facilitators are positive and encouraging about this challenge.) Tell the youth that over the next few days, you are challenging them to spend no more than 2 hours in front of a screen each day and to instead do some more fun screen-free activities. Review the *Screen-Free Things to Do* list.
4. Ask youth to use the *Screen Time Tracking Form* to record their hours. Distribute new tracking forms. Encourage youth to support each other in this latest challenge.

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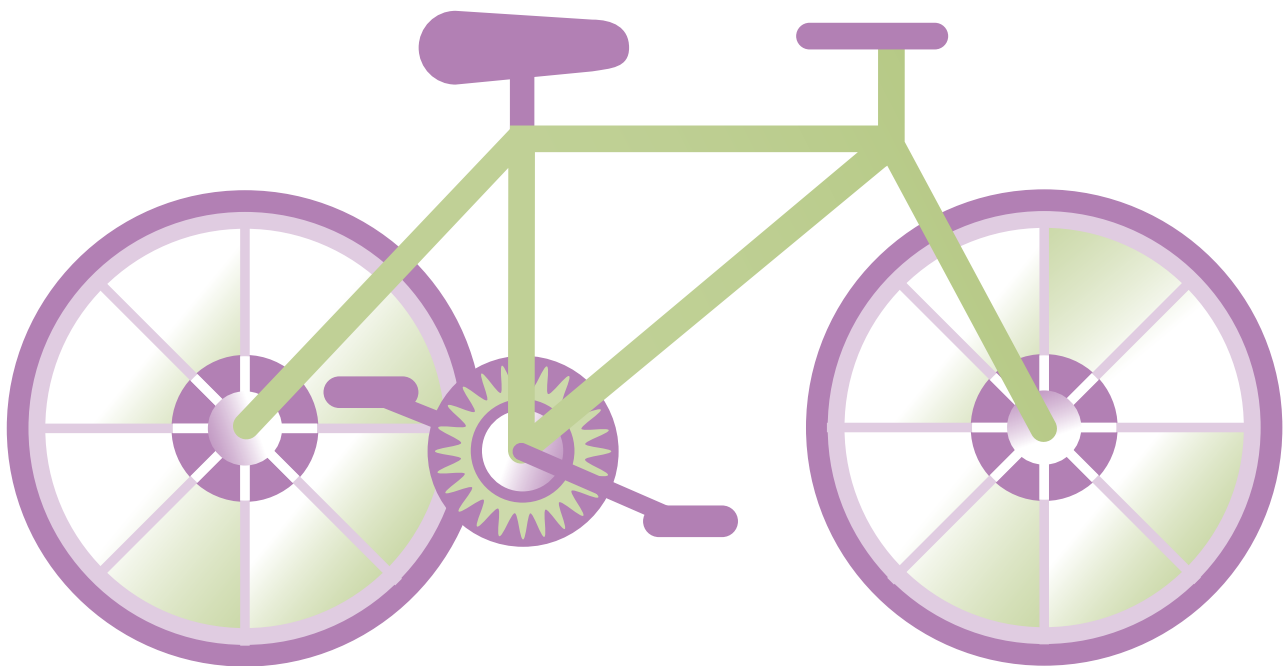
DO MORE, WATCH LESS



5. Remind youth you are hosting a celebration in honor of all their efforts at the next session. Ask them to help plan the party by reviewing suggestions made in Session I, such as food, music and activities. Suggest that youth share some of the screen-free activities they've done during this project (e.g., if they've written a poem, ask them to share it; if they've done an art project, ask them to show it; if they've developed an advertisement for reducing screen time, ask them to bring it to the party).

Please check the calendar before setting the date for Session IV in order to allow enough time for youth to track their screen time on two weekdays and one Saturday or Sunday. You'll need from four to seven days before scheduling Session IV. Share the date you will meet for Session IV.

6. Remind youth of the challenge to spend no more than 2 hours in front of the screen and to complete their tracking forms.





DO MORE, WATCH LESS

## ACTIVITY STEPS WITH YOUTH



### BACKGROUND

This session provides youth with a way to debrief from the *Do More, Watch Less!* project and to celebrate their efforts at reducing their screen time and increasing their screen-free activities.

### OBJECTIVES

#### Youth Will:

- Celebrate their efforts at cutting back on screen time activities.
- Discuss their overall experiences of participating in this project.

### TIME NEEDED

30 – 45 minutes

### GETTING READY

#### Duplicate:

- *After School Program Staff Feedback Form*—one copy (leader only)

#### Have:

- A CD and/or tape cassette player and music that the youth like
- Healthy snacks (e.g., fruit, vegetables, low-fat cheese and reduced-fat crackers, yogurt)
- *Optional:* Awards/certificates of participation for all youth

1. Hold a party with healthy food and music to celebrate the youth's efforts at increasing their screen-free activities and reducing their screen-based activities.

2. Ask youth to share with the rest of the group what they learned through these sessions and whether they plan to do anything differently with their free time from now on. Ask youth if their life would be different—even better—if they spent less time in front of the screen.

3. Have youth play games and/or give a demonstration of the activities they did during the screen-free challenges (e.g., if they developed an advertisement, skit, rap, etc., have them share it with the rest of the group). *Optional:* Provide awards/certificates of participation to all and/or for the biggest decrease in screen time activities.

4. Ask the youth if they would recommend that these sessions be presented to other youth their age. Ask why or why not. Ask the youth how they would improve the sessions. Capture the youths' comments on the feedback form for after school program staff.

5. When the party is over, please complete the *After School Program Staff Feedback Form*. Mail your feedback form per the instructions.





## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM STAFF FEEDBACK FORM

The purpose of this form is to get feedback from you on the Do More, Watch Less! project. All of your responses will remain confidential. Please DO NOT put your name on this form. Thank you for your feedback!

1. Please describe the youth who participated in the Do More, Watch Less! project. (Check all that apply)

- Middle school youth in after school care program
- Middle school youth in club/organization
- Approximate age of youth: 10–12
- Approximate age of youth: 13–14
- Other (Please describe below)

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2. Which of the following Do More, Watch Less! materials did you use? (Check all that apply)

- Letter & Consent Form for Parent/Guardian
- TV Fact Sheet for Parent/Guardian
- Introduction (Track Screen Time)
- Session I (Track Screen Time)
- Session II (Total Screen-Free Challenge)
- Session III (2-Hour Daily Screen Time Maximum)
- Session IV (Wrap-Up & Celebration)
- Facts & Figures for Youth
- Screen-Free Things to Do

3. Did the Do More, Watch Less! materials complement what you already do with youth?

- Yes     No     Not applicable





4. Generally, what was the youth's response to the *Do More, Watch Less!* materials?

- Youth liked the sessions.
- Youth didn't care one way or the other.
- Youth did not like the sessions.

5. Generally speaking, did youth appear to make changes in the amount of screen time?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

6. Do you plan to continue using the *Do More, Watch Less!* materials in the future?

- YES (go on to #7)
- No (If no, why not? Check all that apply)
  - Not enough time.
  - Sessions are too complicated.
  - Sessions ask youth to do something they don't want to do (e.g., cut screen time activities like TV, computer, video games).
  - Materials are of poor quality.
  - Sessions are not interesting to youth.
  - Other (Please describe below)

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7. Overall, how would you rate the *Do More, Watch Less!* materials in terms of their effectiveness with middle school youth?

- Excellent     Good     Fair     Poor

DO MORE, WATCH LESS



8. Would you recommend any changes to the materials:

Yes. (Please describe)

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No.

9. Is there anything about the *Do More, Watch Less!* project that you would like to tell us about?

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*Please return this completed feedback form and the youth feedback forms to:*

California Obesity Prevention Initiative  
California Department of Health Services  
P.O. Box 997413, MS. 7211  
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

## TV VIEWING &amp; CHILDREN'S HEALTH

*A Call to Action.*

## WRITTEN BY:

- Center for Weight and Health, University of California Berkeley

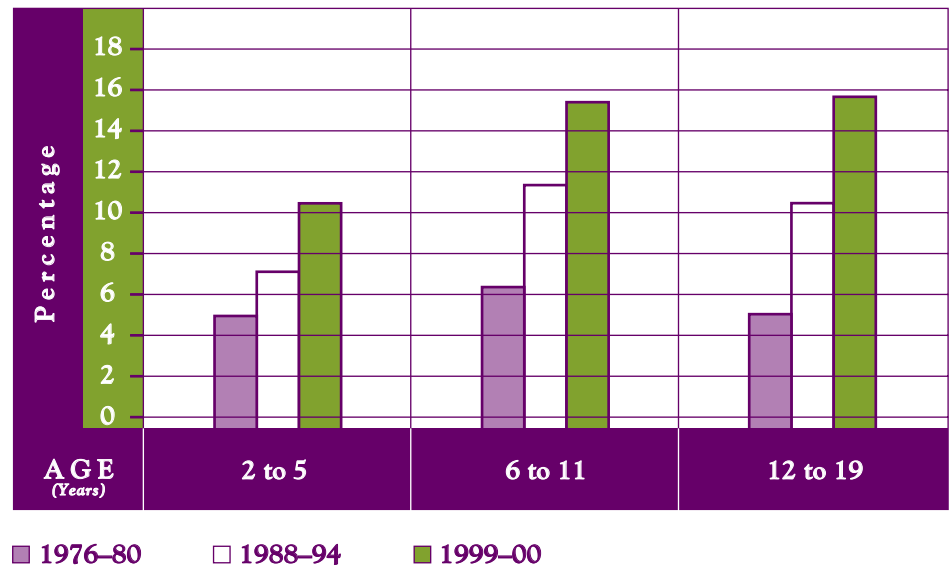
**More and more children are becoming overweight**

An unprecedented number of children in the U.S. have become overweight (Figure 1). Three times more teens are overweight now than just three decades ago and nearly 1 of every 6 children weighs more than is recommended (Ogden, 2002). In addition to the teasing and discrimination some overweight children experience, pediatric overweight can lead to type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep disorders, abnormal cholesterol levels and many other health problems. Overweight children often stay overweight or even become obese as adults. Adults that have been overweight since childhood are much more likely to have a lower quality of life and to die prematurely (Ritchie, 2001). For these reasons reducing overweight among children is a national priority.

FIGURE 1

**The prevalence of overweight<sup>1</sup> in youth is increasing.**

(Source: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey for 2-19 year olds [Ogden, 2002])



<sup>1</sup> Overweight defined as > 95th percentile of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Health Statistics body mass index charts.



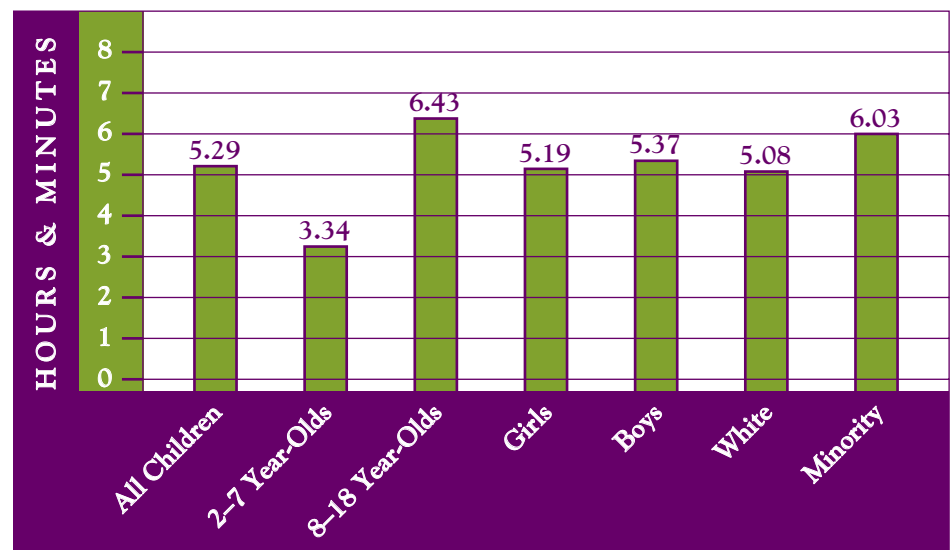
## Television viewing is strongly linked to overweight in children

Children are watching more TV than ever. Nearly all children live in a home with at least one television. Two-thirds of children have a TV set in their bedroom (Roberts, 1999). Children spend about 50% more time watching TV now than a few decades ago (Gortmaker, 1990). The average child currently watches 3 hours of TV per day (Nielsen, 1998). If you include time spent watching videotapes or playing video games that number increases to about 5-1/2 hours per day. Children therefore spend about one-third of their waking time watching TV and playing video games (Roberts, 1999). By the time the average child turns 20, nearly 5 years of his or her life will have been spent watching TV and other media, more time in most cases than to any other single activity with the exception of sleeping. Given the easy access most families have to DVD's, video games, computer games, the Internet, cable and satellite TV, it is likely that children will continue to increase their time spent with these media.

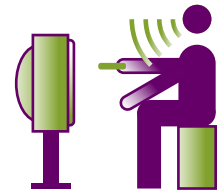
FIGURE 2

### Kids spend a substantial part of their day devoted to TV and other media.<sup>1</sup>

(Source: 2-18 year olds [Roberts, 1999])



<sup>1</sup> Total media use includes television/video, video game, computer, and CD/cassette player use, listening to the radio, and reading printed media.



TV viewing has consistently been associated with pediatric overweight (Ritchie, 2001). The rate of overweight increased 2% for each additional hour of TV viewed daily according to a national survey of adolescents (Dietz, 1985). In a study of younger children, those who watched TV more than 5 hours per day experienced a 5-fold increased risk of overweight compared with those who watched 0-2 hours (Gortmaker, 1996). Most importantly, many studies have shown that by reducing TV watching we can help children reach a healthy weight (Burke, 1998; Gortmaker, 1999; Robinson, 1999; Müller, 1999; Epstein, 2000; Faith, 2001).

### **TV viewing contributes to overweight in several ways**

The two primary ways TV contributes to overweight are: it reduces physical activity and it leads to increased calorie intake. The amount of calories that one burns watching TV is less than most, if not all, other activities, even other sedentary ones such as playing video games, doing schoolwork or quietly resting (Klesges, 1993; Treuth, 2000). In one study, children who watched TV or played video games for 3 or more hours a day were over twice as likely to be physically inactive than children who watched less than 3 hours (Pate, 1997). Time devoted to TV can also result in less time available for other more physically active pursuits.

Although TV viewing can reduce physical activity, the evidence is even stronger that TV influences both what, and how much, children eat. A typical child watches about 40,000 commercials on TV each year, a number which has doubled since the 1970s (Kunkel, 2001). Foods are among the most heavily advertised items on children's television programs (Nielsen, 1998). A national study found that during Saturday morning children's television, nearly half of the ads were for food and these ads aired about every 5 minutes (Kotz, 1994). Foods with added sugar were the foods most commonly advertised to children (Coon, 2002). In an analysis of the commercials targeted to children 2- to 11-years-old during primetime, 40% of the food advertisements promoted fast food and/or soda. It has been estimated that fast food establishments spend \$3 billion annually on ads aimed at children (Schlosser, 2002). Ads for healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, were nearly non-existent (Byrd-Bredbenner, 1999a/b). Eighty percent of the vegetables advertised on TV were french fries.



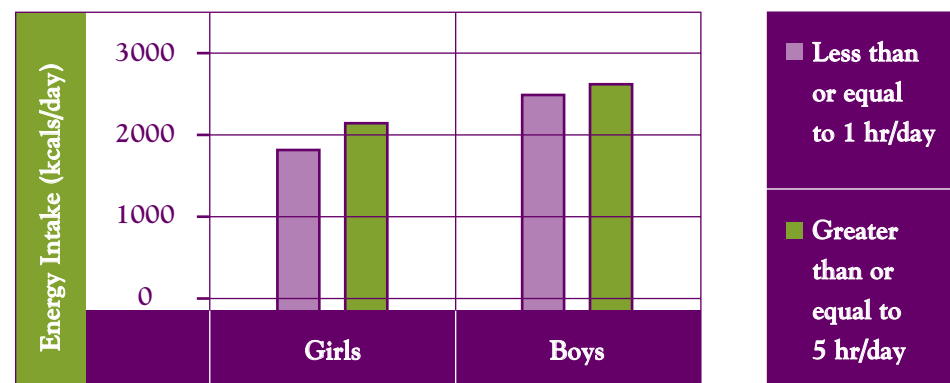
Not surprisingly, commercials are quite effective at increasing children's desire for the advertised foods (Taras, 1989; Borzekowski, 2001). The children then in turn demand these foods from their parents and other caregivers. It has been shown that the attention of children as young as 3 years old increases when a commercial comes on and most children under age six are not aware that ads are intended to influence their preferences (Wartella, 1980). TV ads also contribute to misunderstandings about food and nutrition that can lead to poor food choices (Signorielli 1992, 1997).

Not just the ads, but also the programs targeting children during prime time and Saturday morning, contribute to children's preferences for less healthy foods. Studies have shown that food is frequently (about once every 6 minutes) mentioned or shown on TV shows and that the majority of these foods are high calorie, nutrient poor foods such as soda, alcohol, snacks and sweets (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). Therefore it is not surprising that TV viewing in children has been related to a higher intake of fats, sweets, salty snacks, and fast food, and a lower intake of fruits and vegetables (McNutt, 1997; Müller, 1999; Boynton-Jarrett, 2003). Increased TV watching has also been related to higher calorie intake among children (Figure 3). Eating meals with the television on is also very common (reported by over half of children) (Roberts, 1999). Eating with the TV on affects the whole family and is associated with more unhealthy food choices (Coon, 2001).

FIGURE 3

### Kids who watch more TV eat more calories.

(Source: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey for 8-16 year olds [Crespo, 2001])





## Reductions in TV viewing has many other benefits

Television has considerable entertainment value and can also be used as an educational tool. This value, however, comes at a price. Exposing children to the violent content of TV programming has well documented effects on child behavior, leading the American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) to recommend that children's exposure to media violence be limited. Aggressive behavior and social problems are higher in children who watch more TV (Ozmert, 2002). Reducing TV watching has been shown to result in improved behavior (Robinson, 2001). Additionally, the behavioral effects of exposure to TV violence appear to persist into young adulthood (Johnson, 2002; Huesmann, 2003). Watching violence on TV may make it difficult for viewers to distinguish between the consequences of real-life violence and what they see on TV. Adolescents who watched more TV are also more likely to participate in high-risk behaviors, such as alcohol use, smoking, cutting class, and sexual activity. This may be a result of exposure to media portrayals which sometimes glorify these behaviors (Villani, 2001). Educators and parents also have been concerned that TV viewing displaces more educational activities such as reading and doing homework. Indeed TV viewing frequently exceeds the number of hours spent in formal education. More than 1–2 hours/day of TV watching has been consistently associated with a decreased interest in school activities and lower academic scores, particularly in reading (Zuckerman, 1985; Strasburger, 1986). However, the quality of the TV time may be critical: informative shows aimed at children can improve academic performance, while general programming has the opposite effects (Anderson, 2001; Wright, 2001). It appears that parents have an important role to play by setting limits on TV viewing. For example, children who do not have a TV in their room and whose parents set limits on their TV habits tend to do more reading than children in homes without these limits (Wiecha, 2001).

### Summary

Too many of our nation's youth are overweight, a problem that is only likely to worsen unless we take immediate and bold action. Although many factors have contributed, excessive TV viewing is clearly one of the main culprits. Furthermore, reducing TV viewing has many other benefits for our children such as less aggressive behavior and improved academic



skills and performance. Therefore, offering programs and activities that aim to reduce TV viewing among children should be a priority for any agency interested in protecting our children's health and well-being.

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