

TV Affects Teen Health

By [admin](#)

Too Much TV for Teens



This year, teens who have a TV in their bedroom will rack up an extra 234 hours of television watching. That's more than 9 full days!

Is your teen actively lobbying to have a TV installed in his or her room? Are you having trouble saying “no” without sounding like an ogre? Are you getting concerned that your teen already watches too much TV? New research may have just provided you the empirical evidence you’ve been waiting for. The average teen spends over 30 hours watching TV every week! Kids who have a TV in their bedroom are even worse, spending on average 4.5 additional hours every seven days. And here’s where the research gets interesting. Not only does adding that bedroom television increase the sedentary activity of your teen, it proportionately decreases the time teens spend studying, exercising, and participating in family meals. In addition to exposing kids to more harmful messages per diem, increased television watching has now been linked to less reading, less sleeping, less consumption of healthy foods and less impressive grades at school. Most importantly, the more a kid watches television, the less likely they are to report “connecting” with family members.

For decades, professionals have cautioned against over-exposing kids to the television. In the past several years, there have been a string of studies which try to establish why television is harmful, how much of a factor it is, and exactly what constitutes “over-exposure”. The **American Academy of Pediatrics** recently released a study of its own, and the findings could be very helpful.

The television is one of the primary means by which commercial advertising enters and effects our minds. For marketing professionals, the television presents a medium with an unrivaled capacity for influencing the actions of its users. Programming that leans towards pop-culture fascination is embedded with many harmful messages and alcohol ads are over-represented in commercial blocks. Beyond the social-psychological concerns, there is a very basic relationship between television exposure, and time spent engaging in more worthwhile activities. Regular television programming is engineered to induce a commitment on the part of the watcher. Unfortunately, this commitment has “opportunity costs”, benefits and advancements that the viewer sacrifices in order to watch TV. For teens, these opportunity costs can adversely impact some of their more important goals.

On average, teens spend three hours of every day “engaging” with television programming. Though many of the consequences mentioned above are rooted in common sense, fully 68% of today’s teens successfully persuade their parents to install a TV in their room. Its a decision that can seem almost instinctive, particularly if you’ve

just upgraded that entertainment center in the family room. But moving an unused TV into your child's room can be one of those subtle acts that actually detracts from their quality of life.

So if you're confronted by a situation like this, feel confident in those instincts and be prepared to back up your decision with facts like those from the study discussed above. Conducted by the Division of Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Minnesota, this latest research drew upon survey results obtained from a racial and economically diverse sample of teens. The average age of those surveyed was 17 years old. The study, titled "**Characteristics Associated With Adolescents Who Have a Television in Their Bedroom**", can be found online at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org>.