



Health Notes



School

Date

Nurse

DOES TELEVISION AFFECT A CHILD'S ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

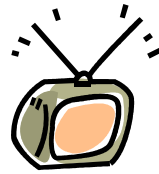


Is television good or bad? How much and what kind of control should I exert over what my children view? Can I do anything to influence television programming? Parents frequently raise these questions about television and its effects on their children.

Research indicates that the average school-aged child spends some 27 hours per week viewing television. Some preschoolers spend even more time than that. Over a year, then, children spend more time watching television than they do going to school or pursuing any other form of leisure activity. According to these results, no other activity except sleep consumes so much time as watching television.

Studies of children's viewing preferences indicate that they choose programs that entertain rather than educate. This is not to say that children do not learn from television; entertainment programs do edu-

cate them in a certain sense. Children's favorite programs are cartoons, westerns, animal and crime dramas, and family situation comedies. Commercials are a favorite for preschoolers. Children spend a lot of their viewing time on programs intended primarily for adults. This amount ranges from perhaps 40 percent of a 6-year-old's viewing time to about 80 percent of a 12-year-old's viewing time.



In terms of time spent and probably in terms of influence, television has to be ranked with family, school, and church as one of the powerful forces shaping our children's hopes, fears, tastes, ambitions and academic success. As a parent, you should ask yourself: What do I want my children to learn? What beliefs, values, and actions do they learn by watching today's television programs? Are there any changes called for?

These are pertinent questions to ask yourself: Do I use television as a babysitting device? Do my children use television as an excuse for not reading, not becoming involved in outdoor activities,

or not doing household chores?

Now that school is back in session, you may want to follow some steps to enhance your child's academic success:

•Children, especially young children, must spend considerable amounts of time in active play. Playing outside is always a better option than watching television.

•Monitor carefully the viewing habits of your family. This is especially important when children have televisions in their own rooms.

•Provide an active family life, with interesting and fun alternatives to television viewing.

Set a good example yourself by limited, selective viewing.

•For more information on the school health program, contact your school nurse at

Contributed by the Central Ohio Association of School Nurses