

# Children and watching Television

Most kids plug into the world of television long before they enter school. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation:

- two-thirds of infants and toddlers watch a screen an average of 2 hours a day
- kids under age 6 watch an average of about 2 hours of screen media a day, primarily TV and videos or DVDs
- kids and teens 8 to 18 years spend nearly 4 hours a day in front of a TV screen and almost 2 additional hours on the computer (outside of schoolwork) and playing video games

The first 2 years of life are considered a critical time for brain development. TV and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with parents and others, which encourages learning and healthy physical and social development.

But despite its advantages, too much television can be detrimental:

- Children who consistently spend more than 4 hours per day watching TV are more likely to be overweight.
- Kids who view violent acts are more likely to show aggressive behaviour but also fear that the world is scary and that something bad will happen to them.
- TV characters often depict risky behaviours, such as smoking and drinking, and also reinforce gender-role and racial stereotypes.

## Teaching Good TV Habits

Here are some practical ways to make TV-viewing more productive in your home:

- Limit the number of TV-watching hours:
- Stock the room in which you have your TV with plenty of other non-screen entertainment (books, kids' magazines, toys, puzzles, board games, etc.) to encourage kids to do something other than watch the tube.
- Keep TVs and internet connections out of bedrooms.
- Turn the TV off during meals.

- Don't allow kids to watch TV while doing homework.
- Treat TV as a privilege to be earned — not a right. Establish and enforce family TV viewing rules, such as TV is allowed only after chores and homework are completed.