

Managing media: We need a plan

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From TV to smart phones to social media, the lives of U.S. children and families are dominated by 24/7 media exposure. Despite this, many children and teens have few rules around their media use. According to a revised policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), "Children, Adolescents and the Media," released Oct. 28 at the AAP National Conference & Exhibition in Orlando, the digital age is the ideal time to change the way we address media use.

While [media](#) by itself is not the leading cause of any health problem in the U.S., it can contribute to numerous health risks. At the same time, kids can learn many positive things from pro-social media.

"A healthy approach to [children's](#) media use should both minimize potential health risks and foster appropriate and positive media use—in other words, it should promote a healthy 'media diet'," said Marjorie Hogan, MD, FAAP, co-author of the AAP policy. "Parents, educators and pediatricians should participate in media education, which means teaching children and [adolescents](#) how to make good choices in their media consumption ."

Dr. Hogan will describe the recommendations in the policy statement in a news briefing at 9:30 a.m. ET Oct. 28 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. Reporters wishing to cover the briefing should first check in at the press room, W203B, for media credentials. The policy statement will be published online Oct. 28 in *Pediatrics* and will be included in the November 2013 issue of the journal. The policy statement replaces one issued in 2001.

The AAP advocates for better and more research about how media affects youth. Excessive media use has been associated with obesity, lack of sleep, school problems, aggression and other behavior issues. A recent study shows that the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day with different media, and older children and [teens](#) spend more than 11 hours per day. Kids who have a TV in their bedroom spend more time with media. About 75 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds own cell phones, and nearly all teenagers use text messaging.

The amount of time spent with screens is one issue, and content is another. On the positive side, pro-[social media](#) not only can help children and teens learn facts, but it can also help teach empathy, racial and ethnic tolerance, and a whole range of interpersonal skills.

Pediatricians care about what kids are viewing, how much time they are spending with media, and privacy and safety issues with the Internet.

"For nearly three decades, the AAP has expressed concerns about the amount of time that children and teen-agers spend with media, and about some of the content they are viewing," said Victor Strasburger, MD, FAAP, co-author of the report. "The digital age has only made these issues more pressing."

The AAP [policy statement](#) offers recommendations for parents and pediatricians, including:

For Parents:

- Parents can model effective "media diets" to help their children learn to be selective and healthy in what they consume. Take an active role in children's media education by co-viewing programs with them and discussing values.
- Make a media use plan, including mealtime and bedtime curfews

for media devices. Screens should be kept out of kids' bedrooms.

- Limit entertainment screen time to less than one or two hours per day; in children under 2, discourage screen [media exposure](#).

For Pediatricians:

- Pediatricians should ask two questions at the well-child visit: How much time is the child spending with media? Is there a television and/or Internet-connected device in the child's bedroom? Take a more detailed media history with children or teens at risk for obesity, aggression, tobacco or substance use, or school problems.
- Work with schools to encourage media education; encourage innovative use of technology to help students learn; and to have rules about what content may be accessed on devices in the classroom.
- Challenge the entertainment industry to create positive content for children and teens, and advocate for strong rules about how products are marketed to youth.
- As the media landscape continues to evolve at a rapid pace, the AAP calls for a federal report on what is known about the media's effects on youth and what research needs to be conducted. The AAP calls for an ongoing mechanism to fund research about media's effects.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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