



IS YOUR TV KILLING YOU?

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The next time you are watching your favorite police drama on TV, ask yourself who is the victim? According to a recent study, it may be you.

TV AND YOUR HEALTH

The link with television viewing and health is getting a lot of attention lately, in part because of the growing problem of obesity and type 2 diabetes among adults and children in the United States. A recent report combining many of the best and newest studies on this topic, showed a very strong link between the amount of time spent watching TV and type 2 diabetes, heart disease and death.

When they looked at studies of more than

175,000 adults with type 2 diabetes, they found that the risks for heart disease and death increased significantly for every two hours spent watching TV per day. Among people without diabetes, the risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease and death increased significantly with TV viewing of more than three hours per day. Other studies have shown the risk for obesity in children and teens is also linked to time spent watching TV. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of U.S. children and teens (ages 8 to 18) have a TV in their bedroom. They are also more likely to interact less with their families and friends, sleep less and have more difficulty in school.

Of course, your television does not cause these

problems. But watching TV is a sedentary activity. We don't even have to get up to change the channel. Most of us settle into a comfortable chair with the remote and only get up to go to the kitchen. TV viewing has been linked to eating more fried foods, processed meat and sugary drinks and eating fewer vegetables, fruits and whole grains. People who smoke tend to do so while watching TV. Although you may sit for long periods of time at a computer or work, it is harder to eat and smoke when your hands and mind are busy. So while your TV may not be killing you, it is probably not helping you reach your goal of managing your diabetes well.

watching how much you watch

You could simply unplug the TV or cancel your cable subscription, but that is not realistic for most of us. After all, watching TV can be relaxing, enjoyable and informative. Here are some ideas for making it a little healthier, as well.

1. Walk around during every commercial and between programs. This also helps you avoid the many tempting food ads.
2. Watch programs that you really want to see rather than just sitting down and watching whatever you happen to find. It is easy to get involved and lose track of time spent.
3. Use your TV as a way to exercise. There are programs and video games that give you a good workout.
4. Keep snacks on-hand that will help you manage your diabetes rather than get in your way. Turn off the TV while you are eating. Eating in front of the TV is often "mindless eating"—even during meals. It is harder to pay attention to how much you eat or even to enjoy your food.
5. Plan activities with your kids instead of watching TV. Plan a family game or reading night. Or go outside and teach them the games you enjoyed as a child. For more information visit yourdiabetesinfo.org or kidshealth.org.

28

Hours per week, on average, kids 6–11 spend watching TV

32

Hours per week, on average, kids 2–5 spend watching TV

35

Hours per week, on average, adults spend watching TV