

Posted at 01:27 PM ET, 10/18/2011

## **AAP reaffirms no screen time for young children even though few parents listen**

By [Janice D'Arcy](#)

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) this afternoon has reaffirmed its policy to discourage parents from allowing screen time for infants and children under 2 years of age. It's the first new policy statement from the pediatrician's group since 1999 and the first to address the new media that's been developed to appeal to the youngest television watchers, computer users and smart phone swipers.

"This updated policy statement provides further evidence

(BIGSTOCKPHOTOS)

that media — both foreground and background — have potentially negative effects and no known positive effects for children younger than 2 years. Thus, the AAP reaffirms its recommendation to discourage media use in this age group. This statement also discourages the use of background television intended for adults when a young child is in the room," the statement concludes.

Members of the AAP know they are waging an uphill battle. One of the first sentences in the statement cites research that shows 90 percent of parents with children under 2 years old report that those children use some form of electronic media. But the AAP says that parents are usually fooled into thinking certain materials are "educational" when there's no evidence to support that, especially since this age group cannot understand the content.

The pediatricians also make the point that unstructured playtime is more beneficial for children to develop creativity, problem-solving and reasoning skills. They probably didn't need to point out that play is also better for developing motor skills.

The statement is full of points that we parents already know, but may not act on: Children do best when interacting with other humans; they don't sleep as well when they watch television before bed; heavy television watchers may be at risk for language delay and certainly

are at risk for obesity.

It goes on to offer recommendations for parents, listed below:

- The AAP realizes that media exposure is a reality for many families in today's society. If parents choose to engage their young children with electronic media, they should have concrete strategies to manage it. Ideally, parents should review the content of what their child is watching and watch the program with their child.
- Parents are discouraged from placing a television set in their child's bedroom.
- Parents need to realize that their own media use can have a negative effect on their children. Television that is intended for adults and is on with a young child in the room is distracting for both the parent and the child.
- Unstructured playtime is more valuable for the developing brain than any electronic media exposure. If a parent is not able to actively play with a child, that child should have solo playtime with an adult nearby. Even for infants as young as 4 months of age, solo play allows a child to think creatively, problem-solve, and accomplish tasks with minimal parent interaction. The parent can also learn something in the process of giving the child an opportunity to entertain himself or herself while remaining nearby.

— From the AAP “Policy Statement Media Use by Children Younger Than 2 Years” **Posted at 01:27 PM ET, 10/18/2011**

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