



Week 5: Feb. 28 – March 6
Turn Off the TV

Two or more hours a day of sedentary time in front of the television screen has been linked to obesity. While many today would propose we simply turn off the television, this lesson will show the importance of limiting time on all screens, both televisions and computers. If you add the increased time spent social networking on the computer to the television time, the total screen time (or sedentary time) quickly adds up.

In a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study, the average family had four working television sets in the home. Most children (64 percent) had a TV in their bedroom, and a large portion of the families studied (46 percent) reported they had a television set in an eating space, such as a dining room or kitchen. Today, children live not only in a multiple-TV environment, but also in a multiple-media environment. According to the CDC's study, virtually all households (99 percent) have a DVD or VCR; the vast majority have a videogame console (88 percent) and a computer (85 percent); and more than half have Internet access (56 percent).

The other screen, the computer, offers us any number of uses, from search engines and e-mail systems to social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. In fact, Wikipedia lists more than 150 social networking systems. And while, many of these networks began with young people, we are experiencing the "graying" effect, with an increasing number of middle aged and older adults joining the networks. Many adults state they use these tools to connect to grandchildren, find friends from school, or to meet new people. Whatever the reason, today's adults are on the computer for longer periods of time.

In weight-loss efforts, the old adage is still very true, "Individuals must burn more calories than you consume." If people are spending a large portion of their free time in front of a TV and/or computer screen, they're not burning many calories, and they are at risk for adding weight.

What are some reasons why you are in front of the "screen"?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The television time and computer time are similar, but the remainder of the lesson will focus on the television. However, the tips for the television can easily be applied to computer usage.

There are real barriers to turning off the TV. Listed below are three common reasons given for not turning off the television and some simple solutions to the “turning the TV off” problem.

Problem	Solution
<p>“It serves as background noise; in fact I turn it on as soon as I get home from work.”</p>	<p>If you desire noise, try turning on the radio instead. Dancing to the music while cooking supper or cleaning the house could become a new calorie-burning habit.</p>
<p>“We eat supper while watching TV.”</p>	<p>The recommended solution is to eat at the table with no TV in sight. If this seems difficult, check out “TV Turn Off” (www.tvturnoff.org) for more ideas.</p>
<p>“It helps me unwind and fall asleep.”</p>	<p>If the TV and the computer are your default behaviors when you have nothing else to do, find a different behavior. Suggestions include walking, gardening, picking a stretch of your neighborhood street to pick up trash and starting a hobby ... just get moving.</p>

To help you begin the journey to less screen time, color the dates below that you want to try to limit your screen-time to no more than two hours a day. You may want to begin with one day a week for the first three weeks, and then you can add in more days with less screen time. By building on this behavioral change, you will significantly decrease your sedentary time.

