

Ages and Stages Tip Sheet

Teens Ages 14 to 19



Center on Media
and Child Health
ASK THE MEDIATRICIAN

How teens are affected by media is important to their overall health and development. This tip sheet will help you understand how media can positively and negatively affect how they think, act, learn, and grow. Use this information as a guide to help you choose media that are best for your teens.

Media and Teens

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that parents set media limits for their children based on their child's individual needs. Below are some suggestions for how to best use media with your teen:

Video

- Teens watch a lot of video content. Help teens find a balance between time for media and time for family, friends, school, physical activity, and sleep.
- Watching TV and movies with your teen can help you have meaningful conversations about complicated subjects such as sex, violence, relationships, alcohol, and drug use. Talk with your teens about risky behaviors and healthy decision making.

Reading Materials

- Magazines, comic books, and blogs are popular with teens, but many contain airbrushed images or illustrations of idealized bodies, which can affect their self-esteem and lead to developing an eating disorder. Help them choose materials that promote a healthy body image, and talk to them about what they see.
- Teens often choose books with adult themes. Help your teens choose reading material suited for their maturity level and talk about what they are reading, which can help them develop their critical thinking skills.

Music

- Listening to music can help teens regulate their mood, but some music contains lyrics that are racist, sexist, or promoting drug and alcohol use. Help your teens choose music that contains healthy messages, and encourage them to think critically about the lyrics in their favorite songs.
- Many teens listen to music through headphones at high volumes, which can damage their ability to hear later in life. Encourage your teen to listen to music at moderate volumes to avoid hearing loss.

Social Media and Apps

- Teens may want to start using social media and apps to communicate with friends and family, and share their interests. Talk to your teens about cyberbullying, sexting, and behaving responsibly online, and teach them how to report any behavior they feel uncomfortable with while using social media.
- Content shared through social media has the potential to reach a large (often unintended) audience. Discuss safe practices when it comes to sharing personal information, and the best privacy settings to use on each network.

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Video Games

- The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) rates video games based on content. Games that are rated for Everyone (E), Everyone 10+ (E 10), or Teen (T) are well suited for teens, but some may still be too violent, scary, and sexual for your teen. Play through video games first, or read reviews before allowing your teen to play.
- Some video games can help teen's social skills and physical development. Help teens choose games that require working with others to accomplish a goal, or that get them up and moving.
- Teens may spend a lot of time playing video games. Monitor how much time your teen spends gaming, and encourage them to include other non-gaming hobbies in their lives.

