

# Ages and Stages Tip Sheet

## Tweens Ages 11 to 13



Center on Media  
and Child Health  
ASK THE MEDIATRICIAN

How tweens 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, learn, and grow. Use this information as a guide to help you choose media that are best for your tweens.

### Media and Tweens

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 tween:

#### Video

- On average, tweens watch several hours a day of TV, movies, and online video. Find a balance between time for media and time for family, friends, school, and sleep.
- Videos that show violence, drinking, smoking, drug use, and sex can lead to tweens copying those behaviors. Monitor the TV shows and movies your tweens watch, and teach them media literacy skills, such as thinking critically about what they see.

#### Reading Materials

- Magazines, comic books, and blogs are popular with tweens, but many contain airbrushed images or illustrations of idealized bodies, which can affect how they feel about their own bodies. Help them choose materials that promote a healthy body image, and talk to them about what they see.
- Tweens may choose books with adult themes. Help your tweens choose reading material suited for their maturity level, and talk to them about what they are reading and answer any questions they may have.

#### Music

- Listening to music can help tweens regulate their mood, but some music contains lyrics that are racist, sexist, or promoting drug and alcohol use. Help your tweens choose music that contains healthy messages, and encourage them to think critically about the lyrics in their favorite songs.

#### Social Media and Apps

- Tweens can use apps to create video, connect with friends, or play games. Encourage your child to choose apps based on their interests and goals, such as creating short movies for fun or flashcards for school.
- Many social networking services require users to be at least 13 years old. Set-up your tweens' social media accounts and passwords with them when they are at least 13 years old and ready for the responsibility of sharing content and interacting with others respectfully online.

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- Tweens often enjoy using social media as a way to connect with their friends. Make sure to set ground rules and monitor their social media use to avoid cyberbullying and sharing harmful or private content.

### Video Games

- The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) rates video games based on content. Games that are rated for Everyone (E) or Everyone 10+ (E10+) are usually well suited for tweens, but some may still be too violent, scary, or sexual for your child. Play through video games first, or read reviews before allowing your tween to play.
- Some video games can help tween's social skills and physical development. Help tweens choose games that require working with others to accomplish a goal, or that get them up and moving.

