

Health Unit Media Release



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COULD YOU TURN OFF YOUR TV FOR A WEEK? TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

The Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit is challenging you to turn off your screens (TV, computer, and video games). This year's TV Turn-Off Challenge Week is April 4th to 10th. During this week, you are encouraged to replace sedentary time that is usually spent in front of screens, with physical activity and healthy eating.

This is a difficult challenge as most of us spend a great deal of time in front of a screen. In addition to time spent on computers and playing video games, children over the age of 2 spend on average 21 hours per week watching TV (Statistics Canada 2002). This physical inactivity coupled with poor eating habits has led to increased rates of obesity and puts people at a greater risk for many chronic diseases (Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives 2004). The TV Turn-Off Challenge is an attempt to turn this problem around.

For the past 5 years this challenge has taken place in participating schools in Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark with great success. For the first time, the Health Unit has expanded this year's challenge to include the community and local workplaces. Resources will be posted on our website that will assist families and workplaces to participate in this challenge www.healthunit.org

So, what do you do if you don't watch TV? The answer is EVERYTHING. A solid one-week recess from screen time will allow you to exercise, volunteer, play, talk, read, create, and participate in your community. It is all about having fun!

To make your TV Turn-Off week a success, here are some ideas to keep in mind:

- Look for fun activities happening in your community.
- Move the television to a less central location.
- Cover your TV and Computer screens with a TV Turn off poster as a reminder (you can find a poster on our website)
- Have TV free meals.
- Avoid using the TV as a reward or punishment. This gives the TV more power.
- Don't worry if your children complain that they are bored. Boredom often leads to creativity and physically active play.
- Be a positive role model by being physically active and cutting down on screen time yourself.

For more information on the TV Turn-Off Challenge, and practical tips on how to reduce screen time, and increase physical activity please contact the Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or (613) 345-5685 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org.

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