The Challenges We Face: Almost 10 percent of infants and toddlers carry excess weight for their length, and slightly more than 20 percent of children between the ages of two and five already are overweight or obese. Growing evidence suggests the importance of preventing obesity in infants and young children to achieve health and well-being throughout the life span. The environments in which children grow and develop can profoundly affect children’s development and obesity risk in the first years of life. Although parents usually have the greatest influence as the primary caregivers, many other adults outside of the home help shape the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschool children.

### Limit young children’s screen time and provide consistent information for the prevention of obesity

The lives of young children are permeated by media—television, videos, digital media, video games, mobile media, and the Internet—in child care settings and in the home. Limiting their exposure to marketing practices as well as promoting consistent messages to parents and caregivers for healthy child development could transform the message environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TODAY’S REALITY</th>
<th>TOMORROW’S VISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool-age children watch 1 to 3 hours of television per day.</td>
<td>Children aged two to five are limited to less than two hours per day of screen time including television, cell phone, and digital media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 percent of children age 0-3 and 43 percent of those aged 4-6 have a television in their bedroom.</td>
<td>Televisions, computers, or other digital media devices are not in children’s bedrooms or sleeping areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The food and beverage industry uses a variety of differing nutrition standards in marketing products and brands targeting children.</td>
<td>Uniform voluntary national nutrition and marketing standards for food and beverage products marketed to children are established and monitored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health information is not yet presented in a usable, understandable format for most people.</td>
<td>Accurate information about nutrition and physical activity for young children is communicated consistently in a clear and actionable way accessible to most people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why should we strive to bring this vision to life?

Evidence shows that...

- Marketing influences young children’s food preferences, purchase requests, and (at least) short-term consumption.
- Substantial exposure to television is associated with greater risk of overweight and later obesity, inactivity, decreased metabolic rate, and increased snacking.
- More than 2 hours per day of television viewing has been shown to be associated with increased body mass index and increased risk of body fatness in young children.

For more information visit www.iom.edu/obesityyoungchildren

How could this vision come to life in your community?

**CHILD CARE SETTINGS**
- Limit screen time for preschoolers (aged 2 through 5) to less than 30 minutes per day for children in half-day child care and education programs or less than one hour per day for those in full-day programs.

**HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**
- Counsel parents and children’s caregivers to permit no more than a total of two hours per day of screen time.
- Counsel parents to coordinate with child care providers and early education programs to ensure that total screen time limits are not exceeded between at-home and child care or early child care settings.
- Counsel parents and children’s caregivers not to permit televisions, computers, or other digital media devices in children’s bedrooms or other sleeping areas.

**STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**
- Provide early education program teachers and assistants, healthcare providers, and community service agency personnel training, tools, and technical assistance in how to provide effective counseling of parents regarding the importance of reducing screen time for young children.

**FEDERAL AGENCIES**
- Establish and monitor the implementation of uniform voluntary national nutrition and marketing standards for food and beverage products marketed to children. (Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration).

**ALL**
- Establish a sustained social marketing program to provide pregnant women and caregivers of children from birth to age five, with consistent, practical information on the risk factors for obesity in young children and strategies for preventing overweight and obesity.

SEE THE OTHER SOLUTIONS IN THIS SERIES
- Assessing Risk • Sleep
- Healthy Eating • Physical Activity

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