Less TV, Fewer Videos Help Keep Weight in Check

Every day, 8- to 18-year-olds spend, on average, nearly four hours watching TV or videos, more than an hour on the computer and 50 minutes playing video games. That amounts to nearly six hours a day in front of a screen.

But health experts warn that too much screen time throws off a person's energy balance, making it hard to maintain a healthy weight.

Energy balance is the balance between the amount of calories you burn through physical activity (energy out) and the amount of calories you consume (energy in). Too much energy in without enough energy out is a formula for weight gain.

"To help your family maintain a healthy weight, it's important to keep energy balance in mind," said Dr. Elizabeth G. Nabel, director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most days. Cutting back on recreational screen time makes it easier to meet this goal."

The NIH's ***We Can!*** program provides the following tips to reduce children's time in front of the screen:

- Turn off Saturday morning cartoons and take your child to a local recreational center, park or skating rink.
- Take the TV out of your child's bedroom. More than two-thirds of young children have a TV in their bedroom.
- Make a family agreement to limit recreational screen time to less than two hours a day.
- Encourage every family member to think of fun activities to keep moving, such as biking to school events or training together for a charity walk.

For a free ***We Can!*** parents' handbook and other tools, visit **http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov** or call 866-35-WECAN.