

TV, Videos and Toddlers

For several years, the American Academy of Pediatrics has warned parents about kids watching TV. They say no to TV time for children under age 2. Studies have found, however, that 90% of kids by age 2 watch TV, videos and DVDs. Seventy-five percent of children in America live in homes where the TV is on most of the time.

A new study in the *Journal of Child Development* suggests that background TV is bad for toddlers. This study involved children 1, 2, and 3 years of age. Experts watched the children play while an adult TV show was on and when the TV was off.

Background TV noise interrupted the toddler's play. Children stopped their play to take brief looks at the TV. Some were unable to return to the same play. While the TV was on, toddlers were more likely to move from toy to toy rather than sustain play.

Play behaviors in 1, 2 and 3 year olds are crucial to normal growth and development. Being able to focus and **sustain attention** are important skills to develop. Background TV may slow development of these skills.


Researchers do not know the long term negative effect of background TV. However, experts still warn parents to be cautious about background TV.

- Turn the TV off when toddlers are in the room playing.
- Play and read to your child as often as you can.
- Create a peaceful home. Noise distracts toddlers.

A University of Washington study found that "smart baby" videos do not help kids under age 2. Advertisers of these videos imply that the videos make kids smarter. No scientific evidence proves this is true. In fact, this study shows that kids under the age of two who watched these videos were slower in language development than kids who did not watch the videos.

Put the smart baby videos away. Spend time with your toddler. Play, read, laugh, cuddle and love him. Eye contact and interaction with real people (not TV) helps your child's brain development.



 For more information on child's play log onto www.parenthelpline.org and www.aap.org

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week or log onto www.parenthelpline.org