

# FACTS *for* FAMILIES

No. 90

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## CHILDREN AND MOVIES

Watching movies, videos, and DVDs can be a fun activity in which children and adolescents can use their imagination and fantasy. Parents should, however, consider the following issues when planning to watch movies at a theatre or at home:

- Although going to a movie theater can be exciting, movies can create anxiety for children with loud noises and frightening and upsetting scenes.
- Younger children may have trouble telling the difference between make-believe and reality. They can be upset when a parent figure dies in a movie or frightening things happen to children.
- Some children cannot tolerate the darkness of a movie theater, even with their parents present.
- Viewing movies with sex, violence, drug abuse, adult themes, and offensive language can have a negative effect on children and adolescents. Many movies are *not* appropriate for children or teenagers.
- Older children and adolescents may copy risky and possibly dangerous things they see in movies.
- Having a TV, VCR, or DVD player in children and adolescents' bedrooms encourages movie watching without adult supervision.
- Movies should not replace child-care or be left on as background noise.
- If parents are unsure whether a movie is appropriate, they should view the movie in private before watching it as a family.

### Tips and Recommendations for Parents:

- Check a movie's Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating and read reviews before it is viewed. Movie reviews can be found online, and on AACAP's website: [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org).
- Discuss upsetting or frightening events seen in a movie.
- Turn the movie off or leave the theater if your child becomes upset or frightened.

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- Use the same care and attention to a movie's content when choosing a movie to watch at home for a child or adolescent as you would a movie in the theater.
- Deciding when a teenager can go to a movie without parental supervision depends on the teenagers' maturity and the friends going with your teenager.
- All ages of children should have their movie watching supervised by their parents or adult caretakers.
- Parents can and should be active participants in their children and adolescents' movie watching experiences.

Watching movies together can be a rewarding experience. It can be an opportunity for your child to have fun with family and friends. If your child or adolescent, however, develops strong and persistent emotional reactions or behavior from seeing a movie, then consider having your child evaluated by a qualified mental health professional.

See also *Facts for Families*:

#13 Children and TV Violence;

#40 Influence of Music and Music Videos;

#46 Home Alone Children;

#54 Children and Watching TV; and

#67 Children & The News; Your Child/Your Adolescent.

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