

# Pause!



## Watching some shows is a bit like biting chili



case, is it? If someone gave you food that was rotten and mouldy, would you eat it? No. That's an easy decision. You know that such food is unsuitable for human stomachs.

Now, what if someone gave you food that is very hot and spicy? That's not such an easy decision. You would have to think about whether your stomach can handle hot and spicy food.

If it can, and you like the dish, you may decide to eat it. But if you know you'll have a tummy-upset, you may hesitate to eat it no matter how much you love the taste. And if your religion says you shouldn't eat certain foods, then you should obey those rules as well.

Decisions about what movies to watch are a little like that: some decisions are easy and some are not.

### Be good to yourself

Singapore's rules and guidelines tell us what is unsuitable in general for all children and teens. Caring adults in your life try to help by making decisions about what you should be allowed to watch.

But remember that you have some decisions to make as well. We hope you will select a movie diet that helps you enjoy entertainment and at the same time, grow up to be a strong and wholesome person.

*SINGAPORE'S RULES FOR VIDEOS AND CABLE TV HAVE BEEN CHANGING. NEW RATINGS WERE INTRODUCED IN JULY, GIVING SINGAPOREANS MORE CHOICES. WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR YOU?*

### What ratings mean

Countries have rules about media because people are affected by TV, theatres, radio, computers, newspapers and magazines. They try to make wise decisions, paying attention to values that are important to society.

One such value is that we must protect children from what is not healthy for them. Perhaps the easiest way to protect children from unsuitable movies is to ban the movies. Or, if only some scenes are unsuitable, then to censor – or cut out – those scenes.

That leaves many adults unhappy because they can't see those movies or censored parts either. It's like saying that nobody in the family is allowed to eat chicken rice or mee rebus just because the baby is too young to digest such food. It makes more sense to give the baby milk and let the other family members eat regular food.

At cinemas, the staff can check to make sure that only those above a certain age enter. But what about videos and cable TV, which people watch at home? In the past, anything reaching homes had to be rated G or PG. So, R-rated movies

shown in the cinema had to be cut according to G or PG standards before they could be sold on DVDs or shown on cable TV.

Adults wanted more choice, so the government decided to allow a bit more. That's why your parents can now buy an NC-16 or M-18 video. They can also watch programmes rated 16 or 18 on cable TV.

However, R(21) is still only for cinemas.

### Some decisions are yours

Many adults are happy about the new ratings because they now have more choice. But media experts stress that parents and guardians have to be more careful about what to allow children to watch.

That's easier said than done. Your parents or guardians may not always be around to stop you from

watching an M-18 video that they borrowed for themselves. Or some adults may not even realise why such movie

### RATINGS

A movie's rating is the experts' opinion about how old you should be before watching that movie.

- G:** Suitable for all ages.
- PG:** Parental guidance recommended for children.
- NC16:** No children below 16 years old.
- M18:** Only for people 18 years old and above.
- R21:** Only for people 21 years old and above.

content is harmful for you.

There may also be times when your friends tempt you to watch unsuitable movies in the privacy of their rooms. In these situations, you have

some decisions to make, don't you?

With our modern high-tech lifestyles, adults are not always able to monitor everything you do. That's why it's important for you to share the responsibility of protecting yourself from harmful movies.

In some cases, such decisions are easy and clear-cut. In other cases, you have to use your wisdom and your knowledge about yourself.

### Not all decisions are easy

Let's go back to the example of the family with the baby. Adults decide what food and drink to give to babies and toddlers. They are helpless at that age and can't really make complex decisions about their diets. In fact, if they are teething, they'll put almost anything into their mouths!

That's not true in your

## What's the problem?

Unsuitable movies typically contain scenes of violence and other adult themes such as sex and nudity.

Let's look at violence first. There has been so much research on TV violence that some facts are very clear.

Research tells us that children who see violence on TV:

**1. May be more fearful of the world around them.** Some children have nightmares after watching very violent scenes. And the nightmares may recur night after night. Also, there are studies showing that children exposed to a lot of violence on TV are more likely to see

the world as a mean and dangerous place.

**2. May become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others.** This means that the child becomes less bothered about violence in general and may not call for help or go to the rescue of another person who is in pain. The child becomes a less caring person. Worse still, the child begins to think there is nothing wrong with bullying and other types of aggression.

**3. May become more aggressive and violent in their own behaviour.** Some children act out the aggression they see on TV. They may hurt others and be destructive. Even cartoons can have this effect if they are full of violence.

None of these outcomes would

make children's lives better. In fact, in each case, the quality of the child's life becomes much worse. That's why the experts say that extreme movie violence is unsuitable for children.

In the case of sexually explicit scenes and nudity, the ratings have more to do with society's norms. Norms are strong guidelines about what is proper and what is not. And most societies agree that adult themes may be too complex for children to understand fully and in a healthy way.

You could think of it like this: extreme violence in movies is like the rotten, mouldy food that is bad for your stomach; and other adult themes are like the hot and spicy food that an adult may be able to digest but not a toddler. Thus, it makes sense to let movie ratings guide your decisions about what to watch.