

Screen Time Tip Sheet

Understanding screen time: Screen time is described as any time spent on electronic devices including smart phones, tablets/computers and television. While screens can be a good way to provide educational content and social interaction, too much screen time can lead to various health issues. Research shows that too much screen time can lead to developmental delays, have a negative impact on physical health and emotional well-being. Individuals with increased screen time are more prone to develop obesity due to lack of physical activity and poor food choices. Increased screen time can also lead to emotional outbursts when screens are taken away and can lead to poor sleep quality.

Suggested guidelines for screen time by age (according to AAP):

- **Infants (0-2 years):** absolutely no screen time except for occasional video chats with family members. For this age group, infants need hands on and face-to-face interaction to help them develop their cognitive and motor skills. Alternative to screen time for this age includes reading books, taking walks outside or around the house, and using toys for interactive play.

- **Toddlers/Preschool age (2-5 years):** no more than 1 hour of high-quality, educational content per day. Good educational content includes shows/videos that introduce numbers, colors and letters and involve singing and dancing and encouraging movement from the child during the video. Balance screen time with activity outside and still encourage play with puzzles, coloring, running and jumping outside, reading books and building blocks.

- **School-Age (6-12 years):** screen time starts to increase at this age due to school screen time use but it should still be balanced with other activities. The AAP recommends 2 hours of recreational screen time at this age. It is important to still encourage screen-free activities as much as possible including reading, playing outside, doing puzzles or board games. Encourage supervision of screen time and ensure age-appropriate media is being used. It is also important at this age to teach safe online practices and discuss the importance of privacy.

- **Adolescents/Teens (13-18 years):** social media use and online gaming are big contributors to screen time use in this age group. The AAP recommends limiting screen time to 2 hours of recreation screen time while emphasizing the importance of sleep and physical activity. It is important to set boundaries with your children regarding screen time use and appropriate sites being used. Encourage minimal social media use as this can lead to mental health struggles or make current mental health struggles worse. Maintain open communication with your child and encourage time outside away from screens.

It is important to remember that screens are a privilege and not a right. You can require that your child does chores, help with siblings or spend time outside when appropriate to earn screen time. Remind your child that it is okay to be bored as boredom helps the brain self-regulate and deal with boredom. Parents also need to lead by example and

limit screen time themselves and be present when with them. Maintain open communication about screen time limits and the importance of this.

Information obtained from:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/healthy-digital-media-use-habits-for-babies-toddlers-preschoolers.aspx>

<https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/screen-time-guidelines>

<https://childpsy.org/how-to-gradually-decrease-screen-time-for-children/>