

Screen Time and Internet Use

Recent Common Sense Media research shows that media use has risen faster in the 2 years since the pandemic than in the 4 years before. 8-12 year-olds spend an average of five and a half hours a day on screens and teens consume over eight and a half hours a day.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry recommendations:

- Until 18 months of age limit screen use to video chatting along with an adult
- 18-24 months screen time should be limited to watching educational programming with a caregiver.
- For Children 2-5, limit non-educational screen time to about 1 hour per weekday and 3 hours for weekend days.
- For ages 6-17 encourage healthy habits and limit activities that include screens (no more than 2 hrs.)
- Turn off all screens during family meals and outings.
- Learn about and use parental controls.
- Avoid using screens as pacifiers, babysitters, or to stop tantrums.
- Turn off screens and remove them from bedrooms 30-60 minutes before bedtime.

Possible benefits:

- Learning
- Increased awareness of the world
- Encourage involvement in your community
- Help with school
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Support groups
- Help promote wellness

Too much screen time may affect:

- Sleep: stimulates your brain and delays REM sleep (blue light, doom scrolling, etc.)
- Lower grades
- Less time with family and friends (decreased social skills)
- Not enough physical activity (obesity, mood)
- Psychological well-being (dopamine dump or social media "addiction.")
- Poor self-image (bullying, compare and despair)
- Exposure to sexual content, violence, negative stereotypes, substance use, inaccurate or misleading information, predators, ads aimed at your child, etc.

Tips to keep in mind:

- Monitor your children's media use for their health and safety.
- Stop use of devices or screens for 1 hour before bedtime.
- Discourage entertainment media while doing homework.
- Plan media-free times together, such as family dinners, activities, game-nights.
- Set a good example. Turn off the TV and put your smartphone on "do not disturb" during media-free times with your family.
- Talk with your children and teens about online behavior and safety. This includes treating others with respect, sexting, being wary of online solicitations and ads, and safeguarding privacy.
- Consider your child's maturity, choices, and habits.