



SCREEN TIME

We live in a world where daily screen time is normal. Phones and tablets are small enough to be taken almost anywhere. Therefore, it is very common to see parents hand their child a device while waiting for food at a restaurant, in the waiting room at the doctor's office, or in line at the store. Devices keep children entertained. As a result, parents often use devices to try to distract, quiet, or calm their children.

What are screen time activities?

- Video games
- Social media - including YouTube
- Watching television
- Phone Apps
- Computer time

THE PROBLEM WITH TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME

When young children are handed a device, they usually do not stop looking at it unless a parent takes the device away. This is because young children have not yet developed enough self-control to put down the devices they have been given.

Oftentimes, taking a device away from a child leads them to distress. As a result, many parents give the device back to the upset child in order to calm them down. Unfortunately, this creates a negative cycle where the child becomes more dependent on screen time and does not learn the important skill of managing their own emotions.

While some screen time is fine, too much screen time can lead to mental health problems in young children.

EXAMPLES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS DUE TO SCREEN TIME

- Anger
- Aggression
- Anxiety
- Uncontrollable crying
- Difficulty managing emotions
- Intense temper tantrums



SCREEN TIME CAN INTERFERE WITH OTHER IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES

Too much screen time can affect a child's sleep quality, interactions with caregivers, and how much physical activity they do. This is a problem because quality sleep, interacting frequently with caregivers, and getting enough physical activity are actually very important factors in maintaining good mental health in young children.

HOW MUCH SCREEN TIME IS ACCEPTABLE?

The American Academy of Pediatrics no longer sets specific time limits on screen time. Instead, they recommend that parents use their best judgement regarding screen time limits for their child and emphasize choosing quality programming for their child.

Reducing Screen Time and the Benefits of Play!

During the first five years of a child's life their brain is hard at work learning how to navigate the world around them. Children learn social and behavioral skills via the magical world of playtime and by interacting with their caretakers.

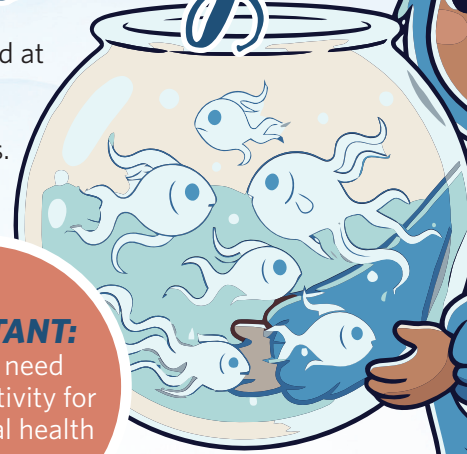
Playing helps children:

- build resilience and self-control
- learn how to focus
- develop problem-solving skills

Interacting with their caretakers helps children learn:

- language skills
- how to develop healthy boundaries
- how to trust

IMPORTANT:
Children need physical activity for their mental health



LEAD BY EXAMPLE:

Children are very observant. If you are constantly looking at your phone, your child will notice. Many young children report feeling ignored due to their caregiver's screen time habits. This can lead to feelings of sadness and disappointment in children.

Model appropriate screen time behavior by spending less time on your device and more time interacting with your child and the real world.

When spending time with your child, make sure to...

- engage with them instead of your phone
- participate in free time activities not tied to digital devices (reading, gardening, dancing, exercising)
- turn-off notifications on your phone when spending time with your child

Make Time for the Real World:

Children need to...play with real toys...be in the real world...interact with real people.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY SCREEN TIME USE:

Watch media with your child and ask them questions about what they are seeing. Help them to understand what they are seeing just as you would in the real world.

- Set time limits for devices (you can set a timer to help)
- Read ebooks together and ask them questions about the story and pictures
- Put devices away at least one hour before bedtime and naptime
- Make time for outdoor activities, hands-on play, and make-believe play
- Turn-off notifications

Create screen-free zones:

- Meal times
- Before bed
- Before school

DID YOU KNOW?

When parents are on their devices they are...

- Less likely to talk or have a conversation with their child
- Less responsive to their child's needs
- Less likely to have verbal and nonverbal interactions
- Less sensitive

