

Reducing Kids' Screen Time

WHAT COUNTS AS SCREEN TIME?

Screen time includes watching TV, using a cell phone or tablet, working on a computer, or playing video games. Because screen time is a sedentary activity, it can have a negative impact on kids' overall health.

Most American children spend about 3 hours a day watching TV. Add to that time spent on computers and other technology, and this can end up being 5 to 7 hours a day kids are tied to a screen.

All of this screen time can:

- Raise your child's risk for attention problems, aggression, anxiety and depression.
- Increase your child's risk for gaining too much weight (obesity).
- Make it difficult for your child to sleep at night



SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES

Today, in a world surrounded by digital media 24/7, and where kids are using technology at school and doing homework online, defining screen time is difficult. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) identifies screen time as time spent using digital media for entertainment purposes. Current AAP recommendations for kids are:

For children ages 2 to 5, screen time should be limited to one hour per day. For kids ages 6 and older, parents can determine the restrictions for time spent using screens, as well as monitor the types of digital media their children use. Babies are most vulnerable to screens, so screen time is not recommended.

HOW TO SET LIMITS AND REDUCE SCREEN TIME

- **Set clear boundaries** surrounding kids and screen time, and stick to them.
- **Decide which programs to watch ahead of time.** Turn the TV off when the programs are over.
- **Engage in family activities.** Play a board game, do a puzzle, read a book together or go for a walk. Keep a list of activities you would like to do together in your free time.
- **Enroll in extracurricular activities.** Get kids involved and engaged in activities like sports, theater and music.
- **Parents, model good behavior** by limiting your screen time, too. Leave technology behind when picking kids up from school, at school functions and when putting kids to bed. Give them your full, undivided attention. They deserve it, and it models good behavior for them, too.

More screen time tips 

- **Create a family common area tech zone.** Kids should be on computers in common areas of the house — not bedrooms or hidden areas — so they can be easily supervised and time spent on screens is monitored.
- **Create screen-free times and zones.** Keep family mealtimes, family and social gatherings, and children’s bedrooms screen free.
- **Turn it off in the evening.** Screen time, especially in the hours before bedtime, is associated with poor quality sleep for both kids and adults. Turn all screens off and read a book, talk about your day or consider a mindfulness exercise to help wind down.
- **Keep a record of how much time is spent in front of a screen.** Try to spend the same amount of time being active.
- **Take the screen-free challenge.** Challenge your family to go one week without watching TV or doing other screen-time activities. Find things to do with your time that get you moving and burning energy.
- **Make your own family media use plan.** Decide when, where and how much daily screen time is appropriate. Visit HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan for help in creating a plan.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

missionhealthykids.org:

Educator and parenting resources on staying healthy and active. Topics focus on healthy minds, physical activity and nutrition. Mission: Healthy Kids is a partnership of Kohl’s Cares and Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin.

HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan:

Create your own family media use plan and use the media time calculator tool to determine how screen time fits into your family’s day.

CommonSenseMedia.org:

Check out this site for information about limiting screen time, media consumption and age-appropriate media dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology.

KidsHealth.org:

KidsHealth.org has lots of resources for parents, kids, teens and educators. Search screen time for age-specific screen time advice and guidelines.



Mission: Healthy Kids raises awareness about the impact of nutrition, physical activity and a healthy mind on kids’ physical development, ability to learn and emotional well-being. It promotes policy, systems, and environmental changes in Wisconsin schools that improve health, and it offers resources for students, parents and educators to help kids eat right and stay active.

A partnership of



Kids deserve the best.