

Screen Time

How Much is Too Much?

Avoiding screens is difficult as we are surrounded with them: TVs, tablets, phones, laptops/ computers, etc.

While screen time can be used for recreational and educational activities, too much screen time may not be healthy for children. According to The Mayo Clinic, too much screen time or too much exposure to poor quality programming can be linked to:

- Obesity – having electronics in a child's bedroom increases this risk.
- Inadequate sleep schedules and insufficient sleep can lead to fatigue and increased snacking.
- Behavior problems – elementary kids who spend more than two hours per day watching TV or playing games are more at risk of having emotional, social, and attention problems.
- Delays in language and social skills development.
- Violence – too much exposure to violence through media can desensitize children.
- Attention problems.
- Less time learning.

Physical effects of too much screen time include:

- Not drinking enough water and eating less nutritious snacks.
- Engaging in less physical activity.
- Neglecting routines such as bedtimes, showering, and teeth brushing.
- May cause gastrointestinal issues such as abdominal pain, cramping, or constipation.

What is the Recommended Screen Time for Children?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following:

- **Children under 2 years old:** avoid all screen time for children younger than 18-24 months old, except for video chatting or time co-playing with parents on apps after 6 months of age.
- **Children ages 2-5 years old:** no more than one hour of screen time of high-quality, educational content per day.
- **Children 6 and older:** establish personal screen time limits that ensure that media does not interfere with sleep, exercise, or other healthy behaviors.

How to Limit Screen Time?

Families can help children limit their screen time by following these tips:

- Model healthy behaviors – parents can set an example of non-screen activities such as reading or sports.
- Delay introducing screens.
- Create clear rules and stick to them – be consistent and enforce your rules!
- Provide fun alternatives to screens (ex: play outside, play with toys or friends, read a book or color, cook a meal, etc.).
- Remember that screentime is a privilege, not a right – have your child earn their screen time by completing their chores, completing their homework first, or playing outside.
- It's ok for children to be bored, don't use screen time to fill the void of boredom.



Resources

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](http://www.aap.org)
- [The Mayo Clinic](http://www.mayoclinic.org)
- [John Hopkins Medicine](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org)
- [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](http://www.aacap.org)

www.dshs.wa.gov/fwb

fwb@dshs.wa.gov

