

Screen Time and Children

Devices with screens are everywhere these days – in restaurants, waiting rooms and even our pockets. Did you know that spending too much time looking at screens (e.g., smartphone, tablet, computer or TV) can be harmful to children’s health?

While screens can be a lot of fun and even helpful, too much time spent looking at screens can impact a child’s:

- brain and language development
- attention
- quality of sleep
- weight
- behaviour
- self-esteem
- relationships

How much screen time is recommended per day?

0-2 years

0 hours

2-4 years

1 hour or less

5-17 years

2 hours or less*

*Recreational screen time.

- 1 Know the recommended screen time limits, set limits for your family and be consistent.

Track how much time your family spends using screens. If you decide you want your child to have less screen time, try these tips when setting new limits.

- ◆ Make small changes slowly over time.
- ◆ Avoid using screen time as a reward for good behaviour.
- ◆ Set up automatic shut-offs for screens.
- ◆ Have other non-screen activities ready for your child.

- 2 Replace some screen time with other activities.

A balanced day includes learning, being active, and connecting with family and friends.

- ◆ Give your child chances to replace screen time with active play, especially outside.
- ◆ When your child needs quieter activities choose face-to-face interactions, reading or other types of play.
- ◆ Ask the adults in your child's life to role model healthy screen time use and physical activity.
- ◆ Make changes to screen time as a family.

What can you do?

- 3 Put screens away at sleep and meal times.

Screen use can impact quality of sleep and the food your child eats. When families eat meals without screens, they are more likely to eat vegetables and fruit and drink less sugary drinks.

At meal and snack times

- ◆ Role model healthy habits and turn off all screens during meals and snacks.
- ◆ Instead of using screens, talk to your child about their day, or the colours and shapes of foods on the table.

At sleep times

- ◆ Turn off screens at least one hour before bed.
- ◆ Remove screens from your child's bedroom.
- ◆ Try non-screen bedtime activities like having a bath, reading a book or playing soft music.