

Screen Time, Social Media & Electronics



Kids today are growing up in a unique world where they are continuously exposed to information delivered via electronic media. As parents, it's natural to wonder what the impact may be on their brains, social, and emotional development.

How much media should my child use?

The following recommendations have been put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):

< 18 Months

Avoid all screen media other than video chatting.

18-24 Months

Parents should choose high-quality programs and watch them with their children to help them understand what they're seeing.

Ages 2-5

Limit screen media to one hour per day of high quality programs. Parents should continue to view shows/media with their children to help them understand what they're seeing and apply it to the world around them.

Ages 6 and Older

Set consistent limits regarding use of electronic media. Ensure that electronic use does not impact sleep, physical activity or other essential health behaviors.

The AAP has also developed a tool to help families create a media plan in order to optimize the structure and purpose of daily media use: www.HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan

Should I allow my child to use social media?

The development of social media has certainly impacted the frequency and quality of day to day social interactions. However, research findings are still preliminary and generally mixed with regard to specific outcomes. In some cases, social media can increase access to social support and communities that they would not have otherwise been exposed to, whereas in other cases social media has the potential to decrease mood or life satisfaction. New social media platforms are continuously being developed. Most kids and teens will have some access to social media apps on their electronic devices or will be exposed to it through their friends and peer groups. Therefore, efforts should be directed at promoting time-limited and responsible use of social media versus trying to eliminate it completely.

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What are some tips for parents?

- ✓ Place limits on the amount of time electronics are used. Determine with your children ahead of time how much time they can use their electronics and media devices.
- ✓ Designate media free times and places during which the whole family is encouraged to “disconnect” or “unplug.”
- ✓ Create clear expectations of tasks (e.g., chores, homework) that need to be completed before your child is able to use electronics.
- ✓ Remember that while there are necessary and practical reasons for cell phones and electronics and it may not be possible to take phones away completely, parents still have responsibility to monitor and restrict how devices are used. Many devices have parent controls that limit access to certain apps via password protection.
- ✓ Have ongoing communication about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline.
- ✓ Screen media should not be used at least one hour prior to bedtime as the lights can disrupt or delay sleep onset.
- ✓ Model appropriate social media/electronic use yourself so your child has a good example to follow.

Who do I contact to find out more?

For more information, please visit the following websites or contact us as listed below:

Common Sense Media

www.commonsensemedia.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

www.aap.org

Mind Health Institute, Newport Beach

450 Newport Center Drive, Suite 380 • Newport Beach, CA 92660

949-891-0307 • www.mhi-nb.com

Mind Health Institute, Laguna Beach

361 Forest Avenue, Suite 205 • Laguna Beach, CA 92651

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