

Children and screen time

Children can be easily influenced by what they see and hear, especially from digital media. Digital media can include TV, the Internet, and smart devices. Some programs can be educational. Some not. These days, children watch too much digital media. Many programmes show violent behaviour that may influence the children to imitate. TV also show poor eating habits through advertisements for unhealthy foods. When children spend too much screen time, it will be hard for them to involve in non-electronic activities such as playing with other children and exploring outdoors.

Parents can help decrease the dangerous effects of digital media. They can check the types of programme and limit the children screen time. Here are some tips for parents to set good viewing habits.

1. Limit the children screen time. Children aged 2-5 years old should be allowed only 1 hour screen time per day. Parents could divide the 1 hour into 2 sessions- 30 minutes per session.
2. Co-watch whenever possible. If children are going to have screen time, the best thing parents can do is to watch the show with them. Help them understand what they are seeing. Comment on certain things, ask questions about what is happening, or sing along with your child. Repeat certain facts or values after the show is over so they are more likely to remember that information.
3. Choose media wisely. Look for reviews about suitable apps, games, and programmes that are good for the children. Parents can also choose educational shows from the Discovery Channel or History Channel. Besides that, parents can also choose two movies for example, and let the children pick one.
4. Keep bedtime, mealtime, and family time screen-free. Consider setting a time when all members of the family shut off all screens. Explain the importance of family time to them.
5. Limit the parents' phone use. Children will do what they see their parents are doing. At a young age, their parents are the most important people in their life. So, they will model whatever behaviour they are seeing.

6. Emphasize the big three: sleep, healthy diet, and exercise. All three are important for brain and health development for children and adults alike. Too much screen time can affect all three. Children who spend more time in front of screens have been shown to eat more fast food, get less sleep and do less exercise. Therefore, it is very important to include healthy lifestyle choices as part of the daily routine.

Source:

Screen Time and Children. (n.d.). Stanford Children's Health. Retrieved May 27, 2021, from <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=television-and-children-90-P02294>