

2 HOURS OF SCREEN TIME!

Limit Your Viewing

By Christine St. Laurent, Wellness Consultant

Time spent in front of the television, computer, mobile devices, and video games is often inactive time. While it appears that children who experience a lot of screen time tend to get less physical activity, here are some other reasons why health experts recommend limiting screen time.

Disturbed sleep or play. Having the TV on at night or even in the background can be disruptive. Too much screen time can impair sleep at night.

Difficulty with focus. Children who spend a lot of time playing video games have a hard time concentrating when they are in school.

Unhealthy messages. Decreasing screen time may minimize exposure to unhealthy food advertisements. Too much exposure to violence in the media and games can desensitize children to fighting and other undesired behaviors.

Screen time can also take away from activities that help brain development and social skills, such as talking, playing, singing, and reading. It is recommended that children under that age of 2 have no screen time and children over 2 have limited screen time of 1 to 2 hours per day.

Tips for Children

- 1) **Log your screen time.** Take a look at how much time each family member spends on computers, games, texting, and watching TV. How can you reduce screen time and increase activity time? Make a goal to cut down by 5 – 10 minutes every few days until you reach your goal.
- 2) **Don't eat and watch.** Avoid eating while watching TV or using the computer. It is easy to overeat while you are paying attention to your program.

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Long hours in front of a TV can be a contributing factor to childhood obesity because it:

- takes away from physical activity time
- lowers children's metabolic rate
- influences unhealthy food choices through exposure to food advertisements

- 3) **Try other activities.** Try going for a walk or family hike, play a board game, make an art project, create your own game, or do a puzzle together.

Tips for Parents

- 1) **Make mealtime family time.** Turn off the TV during meals and while children are doing homework. Make mealtime an opportunity to share news about your day, plan upcoming activities, and laugh together.
- 2) **Provide screen free bedrooms.** There should be no TV, computers, etc. in bedrooms. Too much use of technology can cause children to have trouble falling and staying asleep.
- 3) **Encourage child care providers to limit screen time.** Be sure your child care provider or baby-sitter is on board with limiting screen time and ask them to follow the same guidelines you have for your kids at home.
- 4) **Screen the screen time.** Encourage your children to view educational programs or games that involve physical activity. Seek out quality shows or programs for your children.
- 5) **Break it up into increments.** Limit computer and video game usage to 15 minutes at a time.
- 6) **Create house rules.** Set up a screen time schedule for your family. For example, no video games before school or no TV until homework is completed.

Resources

Limit Screen Time (Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program)

<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/nutritionandwellness/limitscreen.pdf>