

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

Cut Back on Screen Time



Screen time is the amount of time your child spends watching videos and television shows, playing video games, or using a computer, tablet, iPad, or smart phone.

Circle the screens used by your family:

TV Computer Video Games Smart Phone iPad Tablet

Does this scene look familiar?

If you take a look around the mall, grocery store or restaurant, you can see how attached children are to electronic devices. Unfortunately, technology has become an addiction for many children. Older kids are spending an average of seven hours a day in front of screens. Why is screen time so harmful and how much screen time should a child have each day?



Why is too much screen time harmful?

- **Weight Issues**—Excessive screen time has been linked to obesity. Any device with an electronic screen usually requires the need to sit down or be still while using. In addition to being inactive, children are also exposed to food and beverage advertising which causes them to consume more unhealthy foods and calories.
- **Sleep Problems**—The more time children spend watching screens, especially in the evening, the less sleep they get. Loss of sleep is very harmful for children due to their developing minds and body.
- **Poor Social Development**—When kids spend too much time with electronics, they miss out on developing important social skills needed to interact with other people. Employment, relationships, and simple social manners will be limited and awkward if a child never develops normal social skills.

How much screen time should my child get?

Child less than 2 years	Limit screen time to Facetime and Skype only.
Child between 2-5 years	Limit screen time to one hour. This one hour should be a high-quality, educational program. You should watch the program with your child to help them understand what they are seeing and how it applies to them.
Parents (YOU)!	Limit screen time around children. Your children learn by watching you. Set good habits that don't involve screen time.

(Recommendations are from the *American Academy of Pediatrics*)

Tips for managing your kids' screen time:

- **Hold off on giving your kids a device:** Don't be pressured to give your child a tech device at such a young age. There is no need for him to have his own device. You will have more control over a device you allow him to use rather than one that is his own.
- **Keep the bedroom screen-free.** Don't allow screens in your child's bedroom. Children who have a TV, computer or video game in their bedroom spend more unsupervised time in front of the screen. These kids also get less sleep every night.
- **Value family meals and car rides.** Eat meals together as a family and enjoy spending time talking to each other. Your best conversations with your kids take place during meals and in the car. Value those times with your children. Don't let the TV and phones steal them from you.
- **Participate in screen time.** Make screen time a family activity as much as possible. Have family movie night or game night and talk about what you saw. Show interest in videos they are watching and games they are playing. When your child shows interest in social media, talk about safety and privacy.
- **Be prepared with fun alternatives.** Kids are going to request more time to watch videos/ shows and play games. Be prepared with other fun activities so you will be less likely to give in to their demands. Play together as a family. Go on a walk, play a game or dance to music.
- **Monitor your own screen use.** Children learn by watching you. If you are responding to every message and scrolling through Facebook, you have far less authority to limit their screen time.
- **Avoid snacking while watching TV.** For each hour of television viewed per day, children consume an additional 167 calories.
- **Set limits and stick to them.** Be specific about when, where and how much time screens are allowed. Be sure to let your child know the consequences of breaking the rules.



STOP!

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