

Is Screen Time Harmful to Young Children?

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Lately, I have felt a growing concern over the amount of screen time children seem to have. They could be playing games on smartphones or tablets, or they could be watching TV. According to the American Academy of

Pediatrics (AAP) children have an average of seven hours of screen time a day. That is alarming!

The AAP recently created new guidelines for media use. For a detailed report, click on

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/21/health/screen-time-media-rules-children-aap/index.html>. Here is a summary of the guidelines.

For children six years and older, parents are to set limits, but screen time should never replace healthy activities such as school homework, meals and sleep. Children should get at least one hour of exercise each day.

For children 2 to 5 years old, screen time should be limited to one hour per day. The exposure should be of high quality such as programming like *Sesame Street* rather than commercial TV.

Infants 18 months or younger should not be exposed to screens at all.

The Parent Role

Parents need to monitor their own use of digital media so that they do not become so distracted that they deprive their children of the attention they need. They also need to teach their children about the influence of advertisers who market products directly to children. In addition to monitoring, parents can also teach their young children how to use digital media as a tool to help them learn, communicate and create.

A Good Resource

An excellent resource that can guide parents in the use of digital media is Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/screen-time/how-much-screen-time-is-ok-for-my-kids>. This online resource has been around for many years and remains current and relevant. It explores the issue of screen time and many other media related topics by age spans from preschool to teen. It is full of tips and strategies to help parents monitor and improve their children's behavior in

relation to screen time.

Digital media is here to stay, but parents can and need to influence the effect it has on their children. Be strong, persistent and watchful.

With love and affection,

Rosemarie

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