

Screen time

A clinician's guide to counselling parents of young children

Screen time and young children: Promoting health and development in a digital world is a Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) position statement that reviews the potential benefits and risks of screen media use among children under 5 years of age.¹

Counsel parents on the 4 Ms: Minimize, mitigate, be mindful, model

Minimize screen time

- Screen time for children under 2 years old is not recommended.
- For children 2 to 5 years, limit routine or regular screen time to less than 1 hour per day.
- Avoid screens at least 1 hour before bed.

Mitigate the potential negative effects of screen time

- Prioritize educational, age-appropriate and interactive programming.
- Be present and engaged when screens are used and, whenever possible, co-view with children.

Be **mindful** of all screen use in the home, and **model** positive habits

- Turn off screens when they're not being used, or when they are just "background" noise.
- Be aware of how adults' use of screens can influence children.
- Consider developing a family media plan (see healthyscreenuse.cps.ca for ideas).

Remember, children do not **need** exposure to digital media to learn

- There is no evidence to support introducing technology at an early age.
- Young children will nearly always choose talking, playing or being read to over screens.
- Children under 5 years old learn best by interacting with family members and caregivers.
- Too much screen time can lead to lost opportunities for teaching and learning.



**Centre for Healthy
Screen Use**
AT THE CANADIAN PAEDIATRIC SOCIETY



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10 questions to consider asking families with young children

- 1 What kind of screens are in your home (e.g., TV, tablet, computer, smartphone)? Which do(es) your child use?
- 2 Is watching TV or programs/movies on other devices a shared family activity and a common way to relax? How often is a screen on in the background even though no one is watching?
- 3 Does anyone in the family use screens during mealtimes?
- 4 What content do you watch with your child? What does your child watch alone?
- 5 Do you encourage or discourage conversation with your child while you are using screens?
- 6 Do you ever watch adult or commercial programming with your child?
- 7 Does your child use screens while you do chores around the home? Often? Sometimes?
- 8 Are there any screen-based activities in your child's day care program? Do you know how often they are used?
- 9 Does your child use any kind of screen before bedtime? How long before bedtime? Is there a TV or computer in your child's bedroom? Does your child take mobile devices into the bedroom?
- 10 Does your family have rules or guidelines for screen use that everyone understands and shares?