

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



Canadian Paediatric Society

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?