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March Parenting Tip of the Month...

Managing Screen Time

We use technology every day to connect with others, look up information, gather new ideas or have fun. It may not be too surprising that, according to the website Common Sense, nearly every child under the age of 8 in America (98 percent) has access to a mobile device at home. Youth also represent one in three internet users worldwide.



With screens so easily accessible, it is important for parents and caregivers to become knowledgeable and provide guidance on a child's usage. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

- For children under 18 months - avoid all screen media, except video chatting.
- For children 18 months to 2 years - have parents/caregivers introduce and watch high-quality media with the child.
- For children 2 to 5 years - limit screen use to one hour and view with the child.
- For children 6 years and older - have consistent limits on the time and types of media used. Ensure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other healthy behaviors.

To help families and caregivers set limits around screen usage, the American Academy of Pediatrics has developed an online tool to help set personalized goals and rules.

[Click here](#) to visit the *Family Media Plan* online.

The following are additional tips to help manage a child's screen time:

- **Be informed.** Know who your child's online and offline friends are. Talk to your child about the dangers of predators and encourage them to come to you if something or someone makes them uncomfortable.



- **Monitor sites.** Learn the websites your children are visiting and whether they are appropriate. Visit the Common Sense Media website to learn about a movie, video game, book, or app's content and age recommendation at <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/>.
- **Young children learn through exploration and using their senses.** Provide your child with the real objects they see or hear on their screen. Explore how the object looks, feels, sounds, tastes and moves to promote your child's thinking and language skills.
- **Children learn through conversations.** Talk to your child about what they are seeing. Ask questions to learn about their ideas and own experiences. For example, "Has that happened to you?" or "What would you do?"
- **Be active while watching.** One of the disadvantages of screen time is lack of movement; therefore, take advantage of opportunities to move. If your child sees an animal, move like the animal with your child. If there is dancing, get up and dance.
- **Show your child they matter.** It is very easy to get distracted with our phones and screens. When interacting with your child, model putting your phone or device away and spending one-on-one, uninterrupted time together.
- **Provide alternative activities.** Instead of using the screen to occupy your child, brainstorm other ways to spend their free time. For example, building with blocks, creating with play dough or art materials, reading, dancing or cooking with you.
- **Create screen free zones.** Do not allow screen usage during meal times and in bedrooms. Turn off screens one hour before bedtime to promote sleeping.

Technology provides us with wonderful ways to connect and learn. By staying informed and involved with our children, we can provide them with the guidance and limits they need.

For additional information on media usage, visit Healthy Children.org at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/default.aspx>.

Sources:

Common Sense

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/kids-action/campaign/kids-digital-well-being-is-common-sense>

Zero to Three.org; New Screen-Time Recommendations for Children Under Six

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1630-new-screen-time-recommendations-for-children-under-six>

Healthy Children.org; Kids & Tech: Tips for Parents in the Digital Age

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Tips-for-Parents-Digital-Age.aspx>

Looking for child care or parent resources?

*Don't forget to contact our Parent Resource Center at 785-357-5171,
877-678-2548 toll free, and select option 1!*



To contact Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas,
call 785-357-5171 or 877-678-2548 toll free.
Visit our website at east.ks.childcareaware.org.

