

# MEDIA USE and YOUR CHILD



## Why Limit Media Use?

Overuse of digital media may place your child at risk of:

- **Not enough sleep.** Young children with more media exposure or who have a TV, computer, or mobile device in their bedrooms sleep less and fall asleep later at night. Even babies can be overstimulated by screens and miss the sleep they need to grow.
- **Delays in learning and social skills.** Children who watch too much TV in infancy and preschool years can show delays in attention, thinking, language, and social skills. One of the reasons for the delays could be because they interact less with parents and family. Parents who keep the TV on or focus on their own digital media miss precious opportunities to interact with their children and help them learn.
- **Obesity.** Heavy media use during preschool years is linked to weight gain and risk of childhood obesity. Food advertising and snacking while watching TV can promote obesity. Also, children who overuse media are less apt to be active with healthy, physical play.
- **Behavior problems.** Violent content on TV and screens can contribute to behavior problems in children, either because they are scared and confused by what they see, or they try to mimic on-screen characters.

## Our Recommendations For HEALTHY Media Use

- Avoid digital media use (except video-chatting) in children younger than 18 to 24 months.
- For children older than 2 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programming, co-view with your children, help children understand what they are seeing, and help them apply what they learn to the world around them. Avoid use of media as an electronic baby-sitter.
- Avoid using media as the only way to calm your child. Although there are intermittent times (eg, medical procedures, airplane flights) when media is useful as a soothing strategy, there is concern that using media as a strategy to calm could lead to problems with limit setting or the inability of children to develop their own emotion regulation.
- Designate media-free times together (eg, meal time and for 1 hour before bedtime) and media-free locations (eg, bedrooms) in homes. Promote activities that are likely to facilitate development and health, such as reading, teaching, talking, and playing together.
- Monitor children's media content and what apps are used or downloaded. Test apps before your child uses them, play together, and ask your child what he or she thinks about the app.
- Have ongoing communication with your children about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline, avoiding cyberbullying and sexting, being wary of online solicitation, and avoiding communications that can compromise personal privacy and safety.
- Consult the American Academy of Pediatrics Family Media Use Plan, available at: [www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan](http://www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan).