



REDUCING YOUNG CHILDREN'S SCREEN TIME

Time children spend sitting and watching television or DVDs, or using electronic media such as computers, tablets, or electronic games (known as 'screen time') is time they could spend being active. Research shows that Australian children spend too much time being sedentary and not enough time being active. This can lead to short and long term health problems such as poorer social skills and concentration, slower development of language and memory, reduced muscle and bone growth, and a higher risk of being above a healthy weight.

The *Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years)* recommend that:

- Children younger than 2 years of age are not provided with any screen time.
- Children aged 2-5 years spend no more than 1 hour on screen time (less is better).

Tips to reduce children's screen time

- **Set limits on your child's screen time** - monitor how much screen time your child engages in. Decide on a time limit, let your child know and stick to it.
- **Make certain days of the week 'screen free'** - it's good for your children to have at least one day of the week where no TV or computer games are allowed. Offer active indoor and outdoor activities instead.
- **Leave the TV off** - only have the TV on when it's being watched, otherwise turn it off and use music for 'background noise'.
- **Eat at the table and leave the TV off** - try to eat at the table as a family, not in front of the TV.
- **Be selective about what your child watches** - use your child's allocated screen time to watch quality programs they enjoy. These could include educational programs or programs that encourage movement.
- **Remove TVs, tablets and computers from your child's bedroom** - keep these in a common area so you can monitor.
- **Be an active role model** - monitor your own screen time and lead by example. Allow time to be active with your child.

- **Encourage productive sedentary activities** - when your child is sedentary, encourage reading, singing, puzzles and storytelling with a caregiver instead of screen time.

It is important to think about what activities small screens are replacing i.e. playing outside.

Some ideas to get children away from the screen

- Play with different sized balls i.e. tennis ball, soccer ball, netball/basketball, football.
- Play with balloons i.e. punch, kick or throw them to keep them off the ground.
- Play games i.e. hide-and-seek, obstacle courses, follow the leader, stuck in the mud, or tip/tag games.
- Fly a kite, in the backyard or at the park.
- Play with puzzles, read books, do art and craft.
- Let your child help you cook i.e. measuring ingredients.

To find out what media and apps are suitable for your child, look at the *Australian Council on Children and the Media* website <http://childrenandmedia.org.au/>

For more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity go to www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

Sources: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Health (2017). *Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years): An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep.*

**MAKE
HEALTHY
NORMAL**

