

BROADCAST-Screen Time for Kids: How Much is Too Much?

Most of us are tethered to our phones. In fact, we often feel something is missing if we don't have it.

Children are now modeling that behavior and so it begs the question, how much is too much when it comes to screen time for kids? The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says more research is needed but a small study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) showed significant impact on brain development when children between ages three to five years were exposed, unsupervised, to more than the amount of recommended screen time.

OSF Healthcare Pediatrician Dr. Ameera Nauman has a pretty hard and fast rule -- no screens for her youngest patients who are under the age of two.

SOT- OSF Healthcare Pediatrician Dr. Ameera Nauman (pronounced uh-MEER-uh NAW-mun)

“Their minds should be nourished with books, singing, playing, you know, getting them to move, making a playroom for them ... really just engaging with them on a more personal, social level.” (:10)

She also recommends NOT having a TV on, even in the background, particularly with babies or toddlers because it can interfere with their ability to play and interact. For older children, it can be a distraction.

SOT- OSF Healthcare Pediatrician Dr. Ameera Nauman

“We want to teach our children they can focus on one thing at a time and sometimes if there's a lot of stimulation, it can take away from the book they're trying to read or the picture they're trying to draw so it might be nice to just shut that TV off.” (:13)

By the time a baby turns two they can learn words from a person on a live video chat but Dr. Nauman says studies show that happens *only* when parents watch with them and re-teach the content.

By age 3-5, Dr. Nauman agrees with American Academy of Pediatrics that no more than an hour of screen time is a good guideline.

Pediatricians, including Dr. Nauman, say it's important to balance screen time with other healthy behaviors. She encourages teens to be active 15 minutes for every hour of screen time and she stresses limiting overall screen time to two hours a day, excluding homework.

Evidence suggests that media use can negatively affect sleep. Dr. Nauman says the blue light affects the ability to fall asleep.

SOT- OSF Healthcare Pediatrician Dr. Ameera Nauman

“Screens are very stimulating. They can really awaken the mind of a child and instead of a book, that kind of helps lull them to sleep or cuddling sometimes or talking to parents or siblings that can kind of help wind down a child, it (the screen) can help wind up a child.” (:18)

So does that mean teens shouldn't be using their smart phone as an alarm? Dr. Nauman says it depends on the child.

SOT- OSF Healthcare Pediatrician Dr. Ameera Nauman

“You have a 16 year-old child that's doing well in school, that's doing their best, that's you know thriving socially and academically and doing what they need to do at home and you trust them and you're monitoring what they're doing online, then that's fine. They can keep their phone on a dresser plugged in as an alarm and get out of bed in the morning and get it.” (:20)

However, Dr. Nauman says if you have a child who has trouble sleeping or is easily distracted or too caught up with friends and social media, you might want to prohibit them from having a phone in the bedroom.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using its tool, available at its website, to develop a healthy media plan that can be customized to a child or the entire family.

Could use this on website story:

The tool, [accessible here](#), has time calculators to help regulate time spent on screens versus other activities important to health including sleep, exercise, and family engagement.

Pediatricians are a great resource for information about factors influencing child development and benchmarks as your child grows. Looking for a pediatrician in your area? [Use our physician directory](#).

Screen Time Recommendations Summarized

- Under 2 years old – ZERO screen time (including watching television, electronic media, DVDs, computers and electronic games).
- 2-5 years – No more than 1 hour per day.
- 5-17 years – No more than two hours per day (homework not included)