

Smarter Screen Time for Children

Screen time is the amount of time your child spends in front of a digital screen. This includes TV, computers, tablets, cell phones, video games and other electronic devices. The NYS WIC program follows the guidelines set out by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2016).

Why should I limit screen time for my child?

Screen time is a part of our world. Most people use screens many times a day. Screen time can be helpful in your daily life, but limits should be set. Setting limits on screen time makes more time for talking, playing, reading, sleeping, and spending time with family. Setting limits around screen time can help your child develop healthy habits.



Too much screen time may result in:

- Overeating.
- Less physical activity.
- Weight gain.
- Difficulty with attention and learning.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Wanting sweet and salty foods such as chips, candy, and sweet drinks (like juice or soda) due to unhealthy food and drink commercials.



Age	American Academy of Pediatrics Daily Recommended Screen Time Limits
Less than 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid screen time.• Your child learns best when you talk and play with them. At this age, your child is not able to make connections between what they are seeing on the screen and real life.
18-24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If screen time is introduced, choose educational programs that have good messages and are fun to watch.• Watch together and help your child understand what they are seeing.
2-5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No more than one hour of screen time.• Choose educational programs. Watch with your child to help make connections between what they are seeing on the screen and real life.
6 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place consistent limits on the time spent using digital screens.
All ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No screen time during meals, snacks, or one hour before bedtime.• One exception to screen time is video-chatting with an adult present.



Ways you can be screen-free with your child:

- Keep screens and electronics out of your child's bedroom.
- Turn off the screen during mealtimes.
- Make areas of your home screen-free zones.
- Have one "Screen-Free Day" each week.
- Choose screen-free activities to do while waiting – in a restaurant, for a bus, in a car – any place! For example, coloring, storytelling, and playing "I Spy" games.

Activities you can do with your child instead of screen time:

- Encourage outdoor play. Take family walks, go to the park, or have a picnic.
- Create fun indoor activities. Build a fort, dance to music, read, or draw.
- Visit the local library.

Make screen time smart for your child:

- Choose educational programs with few to no commercials.
- Watch with your child to help make connections between what they see on the screen and real life.
- Make commercials an activity break. Dance, stretch, or jog in place with your child.
- Choose educational shows to watch together and turn off the screen when those shows are not on.
- Set limits on screen time. Set a timer. When the timer goes off, the screen goes off.

Talk to a nutritionist at WIC if you have questions about screen time.



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