Balancing Act

Navigating Screen Time for Healthy Child Development

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Divis
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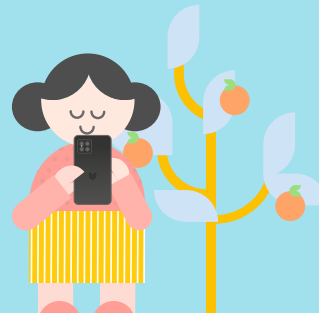
Managing screen time for children is close to maintaining a balanced diet; it requires careful selection, appropriate quantity, and mindful timing. The impact of screen time on health and development is considerable, influencing various aspects of a child's well-being.

Here are the physical, cognitive, social, and mental challenges that may arise because of prolonged screen time:

⭕ Excessive screen time can contribute to various mental health concerns

Aggression	Violence
Increased stress levels	Self-harm tendencies
Anxiety and depression	Challenges in transitioning between tasks
Reduced self-control	Sleep disturbances

⭕ Social Implications due to prolonged exposure of screen time

Impaired social skills	Feelings of isolation and loneliness
Difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships	Negative impact on self-esteem and body image
Impaired emotional intelligence	Social anxiety
Reduced self-control	Sleep disturbances

Academic Challenges due to extended screen time

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Decreased academic performance	Reduced attention span
Disruption of mood regulation	Hyperactivity in classrooms
Low sitting tolerance	Low concentration levels

Other difficulties of long-time exposure to screentime

Delay in Speech for Children Under 3 Years	Delayed Motor Skills (both gross and fine)
Heightened risk of addiction or dependency on digital content	Overstimulation and sensory overload

When is it advisable to seek guidance from a healthcare professional regarding your child's screen time concerns?

Red Flags

- Not responding when the child is being called
- Failing to identify parents
- Not using terms like "amma" or "nana" for parents
- Lack of self-identification
- Limited family interaction
- Increased frustration levels
- Poor ability to transition between tasks
- Lack of creative and imaginative play
- Communication and interaction difficulties
- Struggles with pinch and grip strength, dexterity, and gross motor skills
- Eye-tracking shift difficulties
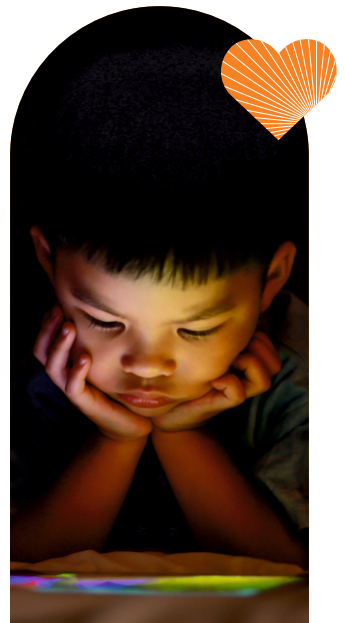
◯ Tips for limiting screen time

- Encourage physical activity and offline creative games for recreation
- Promote art and craft activities
- Engage in co-curricular activities
- Allocate time for story sessions
- Plan weekend outings to reduce screen time
- Avoid using screens for calming or distracting a child
- Maintain a balance between screen time, sleep, physical activity, study, family time, meals, and hobbies.
- Implement a screen switch-off policy one hour before bedtime
- Designate digital-free zones such as bedrooms, dining areas, kitchens, and bathrooms

RECOMMENDED SCREEN TIME FOR CHILDREN

For children under 2 years

Screen time is
not recommended

For children under 2-5 years

limit screen time
To 1 hr/day of quality and
educational programming

For children under 6 and older

limit screen time
consistently and monitor the
media they are exposed to

Excessive screen use may diminish social interaction with children, negatively impacting their development. Minimise distractions by silencing phones and using screens only when not with the child. *Remember, "Children learn best when parents demonstrate rather than just say."*