

## Screen Time

Although we are spending more time at home these days, it is even more important that we, as parents, keep an eye on how much time is being spent on devices, such as cell phones, I-pads, computers, television, etc.

Dependent upon your child's age, there are guidelines to help you know how much screen time is enough for your child and even yourself.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has recommended that children younger than 2 years old have no screen time, children ages 2 to 5 years of age have less than 1 hour of screen time per day and children 5 and older have no more than 2 hours of screen time a day

With school being out and the current restrictions in place, some children may have to spend more time online to complete school work. This may increase their screen time and it is okay due to the circumstances we are all facing. Please be mindful of what they are doing or being exposed to and keep an eye on what it is they are using the screen for. Keep in mind that the quality of the media your child is exposed to, is more important than the type of technology or the amount of time spent on them.

### Some facts about too much screen time are:

- There is no social interaction for the child – the screen will not answer their questions or correct the pronunciation of a word if they are reading aloud
- Children are not physically active while watching a screen. They are not getting up and moving around. This may lead to unhealthy eating habits and food choices which could lead to an unhealthy weight gain.
- Your child's eyes may become irritated, dry or itchy as a result of staring at a screen. Eyes need a break from watching screens, even more so if the screen is small.
- Children can become fixated on the screen – meaning they're only paying attention to what they are watching. They won't hear anything else that's going on around them.
- Focusing on a screen for a prolonged period of time could also result in your child complaining of a headache
- Set reasonable limits for your child's screen time, especially if your child's use of screens is hindering their involvement in other activities.

## Consider these tips:

- Setting Limits. As a family, decide what works best for you. You can state that there is no screen time,
  - Until all the household chores have been completed for the day
  - Until all school work has been completed
  - They have been outside for 1 hour
  - Have read for 30minutes
  - Until they have played independently (or with their sibling) for 30 minutes
  - While eating any meals
  - 1 hour before bed time
- You may also want to consider using apps that control the length of time your child can use the device
- Keep screens out of the bedrooms. Require that the devices be charged outside of their bedrooms at night
- Limit your own screen time. Children learn by example.

A one size fits all approach does not work for every family. That will be up to you to determine what works best for you and your family. Managing your child's use of screens and media will be an ongoing challenge. But setting household rules now will help to ensure a safe experience. As your child grows, revisit these rules and make the necessary changes as you and your child learn together.