



Screen Time

This information supports the following Healthy Beginnings 2-5 guidelines:

- Children will be exposed to 30 minutes or less of screen time daily while in childcare.
- Alternatively, no more than 150 minutes of screen time will be accumulated through the week in childcare. Less is better.
- This includes computers, movies, video games, tablets, smart phones, active video games, etc.
- Do not expose children under two years to any screen time.

Screen time is described as the viewing or use of anything with a screen, including TV, DVDs, video games and computers. Most Canadian children are exceeding the recommended guideline of no more than one hour a day of screen time. While in childcare, Healthy Beginnings recommends no more than 30 minutes a day of screen time activities (alternatively, no more than 150 minutes per week).

Recreational screen time is time spent engaging in screen time activities such as watching movies, playing video games, playing active video games or sitting at the computer. Recreational screen time does not include educational opportunities such as learning to read.

Educational screen time takes place when a child is learning. This can be done on the computer, using tablets or e-readers or watching an educational program on TV. Although this is a positive learning time, it is still time spent where a child is inactive. Time spent engaging in educational screen time is included in the recommended no more than 30 minutes a day of screen time.

The largest source of screen time is television, followed by computers and then video games. Other sources of screen time activities include:

- iPods, iPads, iTouch and tablets
- E-readers
- iPhones, smartphones

Screen time is a sedentary activity. Too much screen time has been linked to:

- **Obesity:** The more TV a child watches, the greater his or her risk is of becoming overweight. Having a TV in a child's bedroom also increases this risk. Children can also develop an appetite for junk food promoted in TV ads, as well as overeat while watching TV.
- **Irregular sleep:** The more TV children watch, the more likely they are to have trouble falling asleep or to have an irregular sleep schedule. Sleep loss, in turn, can lead to fatigue and increased snacking.
- **Less time for play:** Excessive screen time leaves less time for active, creative play.

Adapted from Active Healthy Kids Canada and The Mayo Clinic