Children’s mental health awareness

Screen time vs Sleep time

Concerns have been raised that screen time such as IPads, mobile phones, tablets and gaming machines can impact children and young people’s sleep, something that is important to both physical and mental health and wellbeing. There is evidence to suggest that the use of screens at bedtime is linked to children having fewer hours of sleep, poorer quality sleep and increased tiredness.

How important is your child’s sleep routine?

Good sleep is important for your child’s physical and mental wellbeing.

Doing the same relaxing things in the same order and at the same time each night helps promote good sleep:

- A warm (not hot) bath will help your child relax and get ready for sleep.
- Keeping lights dim encourages your child's body to produce the sleep hormone, melatonin.
- Once they're in bed, encourage your child to read quietly or listen to some relaxing music, or read a story together.

How much (recommended) sleep does your child need?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1 hour 30 minutes</td>
<td>11 hours 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>0-45 minutes</td>
<td>11 hours 30 minutes to 12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 hours 30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Balancing screen time with other activities

Screen time can be a fun, learning experience for your child. But it’s important to balance screen time with other activities that are good for your child’s development. These include physically active play, creative play like solving puzzles and drawing, and conversation with family and friends.

You can find this balance for your child by:

- Setting screen time limits according to the age of your child and your family’s daily or weekly routine.
- Switching off the TV, computer and mobile phones at family mealtimes. This helps even very young children learn about socialising, talking with others and using table manners.
- Encouraging your child to play outside, draw and play creative games like puzzles.

It’s best to keep their screen time to a minimum: For children under 2 years old, screen time is not recommended. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit routine or regular screen time to less than 1 hour per day.

Good-quality media can support your child’s learning, especially if it ties in with his/her interests or sparks their imagination. If you have any questions about which apps are best for your child please see your key workers for more information.

If you have concerns about your child’s screen time usage or sleep patterns you can speak to your GP or Health Visitor for more information.