



REDUCING YOUNG CHILDREN'S SMALL SCREEN TIME

The time children spend sitting and watching television or playing electronic games (known as 'screen-time') is time children could spend being active. We know from research that Australian children are spending too much time being sedentary and not enough time being active. This can lead to health problems now and in the future.

The Australian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that:

- Children aged 2-5 years should not spend more than one hour a day watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games).
- Children less than 2 years of age should spend no time in these activities. Screen-based activities for children under two years have not been shown to lead to any improvements in health, intelligence or language development.

Tips for parents to reduce children's 'small-screen' time

- **Set limits on your child's TV watching and time spent playing electronic/computer games** - monitor how much screen-time your child engages in. You may be surprised at how many hours it actually is! Decide on a time limit, communicate this to your child and stick to it.
- **Designate certain days of the week as 'screen-free' days** – it's good for children to have one or more days during the week when there is no TV or computer games allowed. You may need to suggest active indoor and outdoor alternatives for your child to occupy them on these days.
- **Leave the TV off** – only have the TV on when it's being watched, otherwise turn it off and use music for 'background noise'.
- **Eat at the table and leave the TV off** – try to eat at the table as a family, not in front of the TV.
- **Be selective about what your child watches** – most children will happily sit and watch whatever is on the screen for hours on end if allowed to do so. Be selective. Use your child's allocated screen-time to watch quality children's programs they enjoy.

- Keep TV's and computers out of your child's bedroom – keep these in a common area of the house so that you can monitor use.
- **Be an active role model** – monitor your own small-screen time and physical activity and make sure you are leading by example. Allow time to be active with your child.

It is important to think about what activity technology is displacing ie playing outside.

Some ideas to get children away from the screen

- Play with different sized balls ie tennis ball, soccer ball, netball/basketball, football.
- Play with balloons ie punch, kick or throw them to keep them off the ground.
- Play games ie hide-and-seek, obstacle courses, follow the leader, stuck in the mud, or tip/tag games.
- Fly a kite, in the backyard or at the park.
- Play with puzzles and read books.

To find out what media and apps are appropriate for your child have a look at the Australian Council on Children and the Media <http://childrenandmedia.org.au/>