



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information
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Screen Time and Young Children

Young children spend an average of two hours and fourteen minutes a day with “screen media.” Here are some questions many parents have about how electronic media impacts pre-schoolers’ lives:

If the content is “educational,” is it good for kids? There is a wide variation in programs labeled “educational.” Many parents assume children can comprehend what is said in the program, but the way the information is presented can actually get in the way of children learning.

Are children affected by TV sound in the background when they play? Research shows a significant difference in the way children play with their toys when the TV is on. They spend less time with each toy and the TV, whether it is the noise or flash of images, interferes with their play.

Is all media for children under age two damaging? For children under age two, screen time isn’t damaging if it leads to social interactions between child and parent and does not replace those interactions.

Do scary movies and TV programs go over young children’s heads? No. In fact, these can influence children’s sleep and more. Studies show that children who performed poorly on cognitive tests at age four were the same children who were put in front of adult-directed TV when they were one year old.



Are E-books distracting to young children? Many e-books come with so many bells and whistles that children merely click around on the screen without paying attention to the storyline. However, if parents focus on the storyline and content, instead of telling kids when and where to click, e-books are no different or better than traditional storybooks.

A positive approach to electronic media requires parents to stress the importance of content, context, and the individual child (the three C’s). Ask yourself if your child can follow the story and absorb its lessons. Focus on social interaction and conversation while using electronic media, and tune in to your child’s unique needs, fostering curiosity and exploration.

Source: “How is Screen Time and Interactive Media Affecting My Child’s Development? What Parents Want and Need to Know,” a webinar presented by Lisa Guernsey, Early Education Initiative. To view archived webinar, visit <http://www.lifebalance-solutions.org/#!/screen-time/c1hty>.

Is My Child’s Appetite Normal?

Growth slows during the preschool years which can result in a smaller appetite for your child. Children are eating enough if they are full of energy, growing and seem healthy.

Most young children do best when fed four to six mini-meals a day. Healthy kids usually eat when they are hungry, and stop when they feel full. Follow these tips below to help your child form healthy meal habits:

- Decide what foods to offer and plan regular times to eat. Perhaps suggest two kinds of fruit for snacks.
- Let your child pick from foods you offer and decide how much to eat.
- Learn your child’s hunger cues.
- Offer small portions. Let your child ask for more.
- Allow enough time. This may give your child a chance to feel full.
- Take food away when your child stops eating.
- Offer small, healthy snacks throughout the day.

Your child learns how to eat by watching you. Keep your own portions sensible. Eat when you are hungry, not just bored or stressed. When you take care of yourself, you take care of your child, too!

Source: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_17.pdf.

Test your knowledge on screen time and young children...

- 1) T F TV, whether it is the noise or flash of images, interferes with children's play.
- 2) T F If parents focus on the storyline and content, instead of telling kids when and where to click, e-books are no different or better than traditional storybooks
- 3) T F Scary movies and TV programs go over young children's heads and have no influence on children.
- 4) T F A positive approach to electronic media requires parents to stress the importance of content, context, and the individual child (the three C's).

Answers: 1) T, 2) T, 3) F, 4) T

Tummy to Play

Babies should be on their backs for sleep, but that makes it more important for them to spend time on their tummies when awake.

Beginning on their first day home from the hospital, play and interact with your baby while he is awake and on his tummy 2 to 3 times each day for a short period of time (2-3 minutes), increasing the amount of time as the baby shows he enjoys the activity. A great time to do this is following a diaper change or when the baby wakes up from a nap. Be sure to watch him closely.

Tummy time helps babies learn to lift their heads, strengthens their neck muscles and shoulders and gets babies ready for crawling when they are older (7-9 months). At first, your baby may not like tummy time but there are things you can do to help her.

- Place a toy or book in front of the baby.



- Sing or talk to the baby while she's on her tummy.
- Put the baby on your chest for tummy time.
- Lay on your tummy on the floor face to face.
- Have older kids play with her while she's on her tummy.

Keep in mind that tummy time is for babies who are awake and being watched. Remember, "Back to Sleep, Tummy to Play."

Source: "Tummy Time," Cheryl Fogarty, PHN, MPH, http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/Newborn/topicsAZ/PK-DEV_000329.



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

"An aware parent loves all children he or she interacts with - for you are a caretaker for those moments in time."

— Doc Childre



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