

How much screen time is too much?

In the past few years, screens have invaded our lives. They are in our pockets, bags and homes and this is no exception for teenagers. They are spending more time on screen than ever before, which begs the question, how much is too much?

The recommendation: According to paediatric specialists and educationalists, the recommended screen time for teens should be 2 hours per day.

The reality: Most teens are getting far more than 2 hours. The call for outdoor activities just cannot compete with Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.

The consequences: Unfortunately, the difference between the recommendation and the reality has consequences. When children and young adults spend too much time in front of their screens they begin to develop poor sleep habits, have less energy, are less focused at school and in their studies and as a result they are likely to display symptoms of anxiety. In short they are less healthy and less happy – outdoor activities release endorphins which trigger positive feelings.

How to reduce screen times: Making the reality meet up with the recommendation is not easy, however thinking about activities that can be done during the day will help identify strategies to reduce time spent on screens.

- Encourage reading time before bedtime; reading leads to a good night's sleep and reduces stress levels.
- Swap inactive based screen time for active outdoor activities. Try new activities or a hobby as a family.
- Set a 'no screen' rule during specific times such as meal times or after a specific time in the evening.
- Suggest to have a 'screen free day' such as a Sunday. Dedicate this day to outdoor activities or family time.
- Role model good behaviour by being mindful of your own screen time.

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