



Preschooler

focus

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SCREEN TIME

In today's media filled society, it is too easy for children to spend hours in front of a television screen, computer or video game. While some programs claim to be educational, it is important to understand where you should draw the line on your child's screen time.

Swap Screen Time for Physical Activity

The early years are an important time for developing good habits that lead to good health. One way you can help your child is by increasing his or her level of physical activity. This activity can be anything from playing in the snow to taking skating lessons. It is also just as important to reduce sedentary behaviour, or activities that cause your child to sit for long periods at a time. Children are sedentary (sitting) when they are traveling in a car, watching a movie, or colouring a picture. Activities like these do not require much movement or energy, and they can make up 75% of the average preschooler's waking hours. Usually, sedentary activities include

screen time, like watching television, being on a computer or playing a video game. Although some programs claim to be educational, the evidence is clear: no matter what the content, too much screen time is not good for children. Children who watch at least an hour and a half of television every day are 50% more likely to be overweight. Too much screen time in the early years also becomes a pattern that continues into childhood. This can get in the way of schoolwork once kids are older. Start swapping screen time for physical activity and help your child develop good habits and maintain a healthy weight.



How much is too much?

While screen time recommendations vary slightly for different age groups, no matter how old your child, experts agree that *less is always best!*

Babies & Toddlers should not be getting any screen time (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Preschool Children older than 2 years of age should get less than 1 to 2 hours of screen time each day (Canadian Pediatric Society)

Children 5-11 years of age should get no more than 2 hours of screen time each day (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology)



For infants and preschool children, experts suggest limiting the amount of prolonged sitting.

Before going outdoors, be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the cold weather. For some activities, it may be a good idea to pack extra clothing in case your child gets too cold or wet!



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Learn about your preschooler's health and physical activity through a study conducted at McMaster University! Contact Nicole at machopp@mcmaster.ca or (905) 521-2100 x.77217 or visit us online at fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp

Tips for Reducing Sedentary Behaviour

Here are some suggestions by Okely (2011) and We Can! on how you can reduce your child's screen time and sedentary behaviour:

- Explain to your kids that sitting less and moving more will help them feel good and stay at a healthy weight.
- Remove televisions, computers and game consoles from your child's bedroom.
- Turn the television off during meals and anytime it is not being watched.
- Set limits on screen time for you and your child. Children will copy your behaviour, so be sure to set a good example.
- Do not use screen time as a reward or punishment. This only makes it seem more important to children.
- Get children to walk instead of sitting in a stroller, even if just for part of the trip.
- Walk instead of taking the car, or break up long car rides by stopping at a playground for 10-15 minutes.

Did You Know?



On average, girls are more sedentary than boys. As well, studies on screen time show that almost half of preschoolers are watching more than two hours of television a day. More research is needed to find out what other types of sedentary activities preschool children engage in during their waking hours, and how these activities differ between boys and girls.

Warm Up This Winter By Staying Active

There is no reason to stay indoors this winter. Layer up and head outdoors where you and your child can enjoy some of these fun activities:

- ❖ Build a snowman, dress it up and give it a name. Why not also give it a friend and a home by making a snow puppy and a fort. Be creative and see what else you and your child can make out of snow.
- ❖ Go skating. There are lots of indoor and outdoor skating rinks where you can teach your child how to skate. If you do not own skates, check online for places with rentals.
- ❖ Find a fresh patch of fallen snow and make trails out of your footprints. See who can make the craziest and longest trail. Make them curvy and with zigzags, or even try making them by walking backwards.
- ❖ Find places nearby where you can sign up your child for ski/snowboarding lessons. You can also take your child sledding or on a snowshoeing adventure.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Active Healthy Kids Canada (www.activehealthykids.ca)
 Best Start Resource Centre (www.beststart.org/haveaballtogether/campaign.html)
 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (www.cflri.ca)
 Caring for Kids (www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
 McMaster University Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program (fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp)
 ParticipACTION (www.participaction.com)
 We Can! (wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov)

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