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Screen Time

Most people have heard the rule “No screens under the age of 2.” The American Academy of Pediatrics established that rule back in 1999, yet many were not following the suggestion or were not considering certain items as screens. In October of 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics revised its recommendations based on new research and societal norms. Their new focus is on helping families develop healthy media habits early on, and on the importance of the interaction between child, family member, and screen. The following is a short breakdown of the recommendations by age:

Birth to 18 months - Avoid screens except for live video chats.

18-24 months – Do not allow solo screen time and use only ‘high-quality programming/apps’.

2 and up – Allow a maximum of 1 hour of screen time a day, which is limited to ‘high-quality programming/apps’ that are co-viewed or co-played. Balance screen time with physical activity, adequate sleep, media-free time as a family, and other healthy body and mind activities.

Children and teens – Families are encouraged to develop a personalized media plan for their children and share it with caregivers so they are followed consistently.

Bedtime should be screen-free for children. Most adolescents need 9.25 hours of sleep to function properly. According to Dr. Victoria Molfese, Chancellor Professor and Co-Director of the Early Development and Learning Lab at University of Nebraska – Lincoln, children exhibit symptoms of sleep deprivation very differently than adults. While sleep deprivation causes us to be tired and move slowly, children are the opposite, with what may appear to be ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) symptoms. Be sure children do not have access to a device with a screen in their bedrooms. It is best to remove those from use well before bedtime.

To learn more about the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations on screen time, check out their website at aap.org.