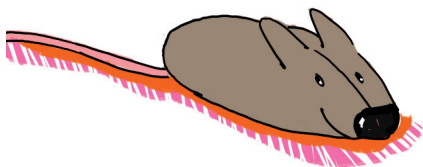


Did you know that:

A child's brain develops best in reality; through movement, exercise and playing with other people. The younger the child, the more negative screens can be, as they deprive the child of vital time to develop. There is no need to feel stressed by technology. Computers are relatively simple, and children learn how to use them easily and quickly when they reach school age. At the age of 0-2 years, it is recommended that children do not spend any time in front of a screen. In the case of preschool children, it should be restricted to a maximum of one hour, and ideally in the company of adults who can interact with the child and explain things. When they reach middle school age, the total time should not exceed two hours per day. Reduced screen time means more movement and exercise, which has proved to be beneficial for both the body and learning ability.



Why does screen time need to be limited?

We are easily 'bewitched' by screens, and children and young people are not mature enough to limit themselves. They need the help of adults who can assume responsibility – even if the child protests. A young brain develops best in reality and through movement and exercise, which in turn aid the learning process. Long periods spent in front of a screen and multitasking impede development, give rise to concentration and sleep problems, and have a negative impact on mood.



The IDEFICS study offers five folders aimed at promoting children's health:

- Water – the best way to quench your thirst!
- Good sleeping habits are important for your child!
- Enjoy your time together – television and other screens can wait!
- Fruit and vegetables are tasty!
- Play and exercise are good for children and adults!

The folders and other material can be downloaded at [www.vgregion.se/obesity decision support](http://www.vgregion.se/obesity%20decision%20support) under the heading brochures/folders. The folders are funded by the Public Health Committee, Region Västra Götaland. They can be ordered at adress.distributionscentrum@vgregion.se.

2008 © Published by Dr Staffan Mårild, Queen Silvia Children's Hospital. The Swedish text was processed and updated in 2017 by paediatrician and author Åse Victorin.

Enjoy your time together – television and other screens can wait!



www.ideficsstudy.eu

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Committee Region Västra Götaland

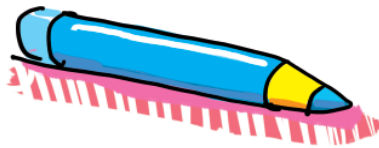


Five tips on how to keep screen time at a suitable level



Establish a clear set of rules

All children feel secure when they know in advance what the rules are. Decide what will apply in your family and how much screen time the children will have. Stick to your decisions. Avoid screen time for at least an hour before your child goes to bed. The same applies on weekday mornings, when time is short. Your child can instead eat breakfast and talk for a while in a calm, quiet setting. Select the TV programmes that are to be watched and turn off the television between programmes.



Suggest alternative activities

Make a list of fun activities that your child, or the two of you together, can do both indoors and outdoors. Look for ways to stimulate your child's other interests and talents. A good rule could be that one hour spent sitting still in front of a screen should be matched by one hour of physical activity. If your child begins a sport or leisure activity, it is good if they complete a full term before deciding to stop or continue.



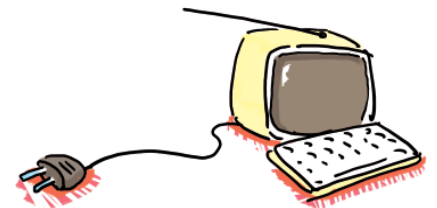
Avoid eating in front of a screen

As a parent, you are the one who decides that your children should eat meals at the dinner table, ideally at regular times and as far as possible together with the whole family. Eating together has been shown to be a major contributing factor to good health among children.



No screens in the bedroom

You should ideally keep screens in a place where you can see your child. Decide on a number of screen-free areas. Ensure that your child's bedroom is free of screens at night. By doing so, they will have a calm environment in which to sleep. The screens should also be inaccessible as your child may be tempted to wake up during the night or early in the morning to play games. This results in a lack of sleep and poorer sleep quality. When your child eventually has her or his own mobile phone, always make it a habit to charge the phone in a room other than the bedroom. Otherwise, it could easily become a subconscious stress factor.



Screen-free time

You should ideally introduce screen-free days when your child has the opportunity to think of something other than the screen and what goes on there. Assume power over your own relaxation, and turn off your mobile for a number of hours when you want to focus purely on your family. This is something your child will sense and appreciate. Do not allow screen time to become a reward for your child – choose other enjoyable activities instead.

