

*“Kids today are the first generation to grow up in this digital world. The media’s influence has never been so powerful, and raising children in a “digital age” presents parents with both opportunities and challenges.”*

(Commonsensemedia.org)

Screens like TVs, computers and hand held devices are important in our world. Children must learn to manage screens if they wish to live healthy and balanced lives.



### Screen Smart Fact:

Children aged 5-11 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.

CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY (CSEP), AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA 2011

### Fact #1

#### Reduced screen time leads to more school success.

Research indicates that too much screen time is linked to:

- Attention and Learning Problems
- Poor Problem Solving, Imagination & Creativity
- Poor Language Development & Reading Skills

### Fact #2

#### Reduced screen time leads to more physical activity and better physical fitness.

Our bodies are designed to move and research indicates:

- Children, ages 8 to 18, spend more time sitting in front of computer, television, and game screens than any other activity in their lives except sleeping.

### Fact #3:

#### Reduced screen time means better nutrition.

Kids eat what they watch and eat while they watch and the research indicates:

- Screen time (TV) exposes children to the marketing of unhealthy food and drink choices. Children who watch more TV snack more and drink more sugary drinks.

### Fact #4:

#### Reduced screen time is associated with healthier weights

Less screen time means more physical activity and less junk food. Children who watch more than 2 hours of screen time per day have double the risk of being overweight or obese than children who watch an hour or less per day

- Nearly 1 of every 3 children is at risk of being overweight. Complications of obesity include:
  - High Cholesterol
  - High Blood Pressure
  - Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, and
  - Many Other Health and Social Problems

### Fact #5:

#### Reduced screen time leads to better social skills.

Social skills are critical to success in today’s world and research indicates:

- Too much screen time can lead to poor social skills.
- In adolescents, increased time spent viewing television, videos or DVDs, gaming, and using computers may be associated with poor attachment to parents and peers.
- More time spent watching violent television is related to less time engaged in other activities with friends. More time spent co-viewing television with friends was related to more time engaged in other activities with friends.

## Appendix G: Screen Time Information Sheet

### Parents make a difference in the balance of their child's lives.

Research indicates:

- Only 1/3 of parents set parental controls and monitor their children's online activities.
- Children whose parents set rules or limit access to screens spend less time with media than their peers. Parents who impose media-related rules of time limits or content limits have children who are less media saturated.

### Top Ten Screen Tips

1. Limit screen time (TV, videos, computer games, and internet) to less than 2 hours per day. One hour is better. Especially, limit inactive recreational screen time.
2. Limit TV viewing or computer use before bed, and take screens out of bedrooms. Using screens before bedtime can lead to sleep problems in children.
3. Create "house rules" to turn off the screens at mealtimes and while doing homework and all screens should be off if not being watched.
4. Make sure sitters or other caregivers are aware of your house rules.
5. Encourage children to choose healthy snacks and reduce snacking in front of TV. Children tend to eat while they watch, and eat what they watch (which is often unhealthy).
6. Help children develop the skills and the balanced perspective they need to use media information effectively and wisely. Children need to be critical thinkers and separate what is real from what is virtual.
7. Have a family reading time each evening, where family members sit in the same room to read something of their choice. Too many kids replace books with screens.
8. Get active together. Go for a walk, bike ride, ski, or swim. Help children experience life instead of watching it.
9. Create opportunities at home for your child to socially interact with family members and friends. Communication skills are often lost with excessive use of screens.
10. Limit your own screen time, and let your children see you participate in sports, hobbies, and active, creative play. Let them learn from you how to balance media use as part of a healthy lifestyle.

