Tips for Reducing Children's Screen Time and Adult's Too!

Screened devices are a common part of everyday activities. From using the self-checkout station at the grocery store to reading your favorite author's new book on a tablet, time spent using screened devices is more than just the TV or smartphone.

While screens are a part of today's culture, there are health benefits related to reducing screen time, including improved physical health, decreased obesity and more time to play and explore.

Evaluating children's screen time

This is especially true for children spending considerable time learning on computers and tablets. It's important to use break times to get in some physical activity. When the school day wraps up, have a plan to put away devices somewhere out of sight and engage kids in other ways.

While the average time spent on screens is seven to 10 hours,

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends these acceptable amount of screen time limits:

- No screen time for children under 2
- One hour per day for children 2 to 12
- Two hours per day for teens and adults

Limiting screen time also helps parents keep a closer eye on what their children are experiencing on social media and the internet.

While more research is needed to fully understand the effects screen time levels have on kids, parents are not off the hook. Screen time affects adults the same as children. Too much screen time puts everyone at risk of obesity, and it's linked with sleep disturbances and can affect relationships.

For kids, especially teens, there are studies concerning the negative effects of screen time and its relationship to anxiety, depression and attention span.

Tips to trim your children's screen time when not in school:

1. Be accountable.

Set expectations with your kids, and create goals to be intentional about reducing screen time. Many devices have features to set time limits for use.

2. Be realistic.

If your kids spend a lot of leisure time on screens, including watching TV, start by setting smaller, more attainable goals. Instead of jumping right to the

recommended one to two hours or less per day, start by cutting their current screen time in half.

3. Be engaged.

After school or work, spend time each day talking face to face with kids and give them your full attention.

4. Put hand-held devices away.

During screen-free hours, put devices away or at a charging station in a common area so they're not attracting your kids' attention.

5. Create phone-free zones in the home.

Making family meal areas a phone-free zone is an easy way to start.

6. Go outside.

Putting down the phone and taking a walk or playing outdoors increases your endorphins and provides that feeling of happiness in your brain, boosting your mood and improving your physical health.

Taken from mayoclinichealthsystem.org, Sarah Scherger, M.D.