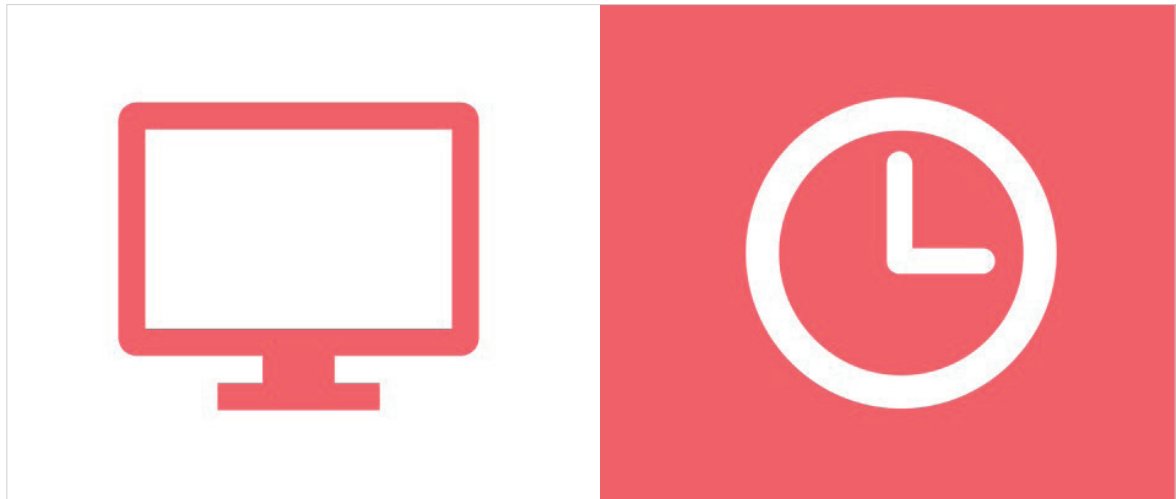


Screen Time During Corona Times

In these times, there's probably a lot more screen time than you'd like. What should you insist on and how can you minimize the damage?



Screen Time: Reorganization

Screen time is time spent watching TV, playing video games, on the computer, tablet or cellphones. A healthy routine includes a few limitations on the daily screen time, while aspiring to minimize the kids' screen time as much as possible. During these times, when we're dealing with the coronavirus, there are quite a few challenges to the usual screen time limitations. The remote learning that the Ministry of Education has set up requires using a computer and contact with family and friends is also only through video calls. The long hours at home have turned the screen time into the most available possibility for parents to have a break. To keep healthy screen habits, you need to change and adjust the usual limits.

How much screen time should you allow the kids?

It's recommended not to expose children under two years old to screens at all. Kids at this age don't gain anything from using media so you should try to completely limit media usage at these ages. Kids aged two to five can watch TV up to one hour a day, in addition to short video calls with family and friends. Elementary and high school kids can use the media for studying or for creative activity, so providing them with more screen time is possible. Still, it's important to limit the screen time for leisure purposes to two hours a day.

What should you insist on?

During these times your kids still need a variety of activities to develop. It's important to make sure that their daily routine also includes free play time, exercise, arts and crafts, and time spent with other family members. For this, you need to limit how much time they spend using screens, even when they're being used for learning or talking to friends. Also, it's important to continue being involved in the content your kids are consuming through the media. This is how you can do this:

- **Limit** the screen time for leisure and include it as part of the daily schedule. Make sure to set age appropriate times.
- **Show a personal example** and limit your own screen time. Try putting your cellphone aside as well, and get news updates only once or twice a day. Avoid having the TV on in the background.
- **Offer alternatives:** include a variety of activities in the daily routine and make sure to have ideas the kids can use. The younger the kids are, the more you'll need to be actively involved in parts of their daily routine. Still, together with the kids, try thinking of ideas for games or arts and crafts that they can do on their own so that you can have a break.
- **Choose the contents** the kids watch or play. Try choosing options that provide learning opportunities. Make sure to choose content that presents positive role models, or content that encourages creativity. **Avoid consuming violent content.** Check games or programs before you allow their use and make sure that they're age appropriate.
- Only allow the use of televisions and computers in **shared spaces** and avoid having screens in the kids rooms.
- **Join them** - sit with the kids to watch a program or play video games with them. This way you can make sure they're consuming quality content, explain things to them if necessary and help the kids expand their horizons in their natural areas of interest.
- **Discuss the content** of the program or game and encourage your kids to think critically.
- **Show interest** in what the teenagers do online, install programs or filters that will block their access to inappropriate content.
- **Set a time to stop using screens** every evening, to allow a calm transition to sleep.