The health impacts of screen time:

a fact sheet for parents

There are no 'safe' amounts of screen time, and the amount of screen use that is right will vary from family to family. We suggest you ask yourself the following questions:

1: Is screen time in your household controlled?

This means BOTH the screen use of children, teenagers AND adults in the family.

2: Does screen use interfere with what your family want to do?

This will obviously vary from family to family, but remember, for younger children, face-to-face social interaction is vital to the development of language and other skills, and screen-based interaction is not an effective substitute for this.

3: Does screen use interfere with sleep?

We recommend that screens are avoided for an hour before a planned sleep time.

4: Are you able to control snacking during screen time?

It can be very easy to lose track if meals are eaten in front of screens!

We asked children and young people for their views on screen time...

Positives about screen time

Gives you knowledge
It's entertaining and enjoyable
Provides you with more opportunities to reach a wider community

Negatives about screen time

Keeps you awake
Hurts your eyes and stresses you out
Loss of social connection

109 children and young people aged 11-24 years took part in this engagement exercise.

RCPCH &Us
The voice of children, young people and families

I want to reduce screen time in my house: what can I do?

Have a plan and stick to it: It is helpful to sit down in calm moment, as a family, and discuss the boundaries of screen use that you will be adopting, using the above questions as a guide. It is important that: everyone understands the boundaries; family members are praised and, if appropriate, rewarded for respecting these boundaries; and boundaries are consistently applied and, if necessary, consequences are put in place.

Be aware, but not intrusive or judgmental, when it comes to teenagers' use of the internet

Think about your own media use: maybe what you are doing on your phone is important, but can it wait?

Prioritise face-to-face interaction: online interaction is great, but no substitute for the real thing!

Be snack aware: If you are going to combine snacks with screen use, do so as part of an overall diet plan.

Protect sleep: No screens for an hour before planned sleep time is a sensible rule of thumb

Key resources for parents

- NSPCC [online safety information](#) and [NetAware](#) – a no-nonsense guide to social networks, apps and games, including privacy settings and age suitability advice.
- NHS [change4life](#) - healthy recipes, nutritional advice, and top tips and activities to help families stay healthy.

This fact sheet has been produced by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) as a guide to support parents in navigating their children's screen use. For more information please visit https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/screen-time. First published January 2019.