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## Screen Time NEWSLETTER 2018

Newsletter for Niagara County Child Care Providers, Parents & Child Advocates



I try to check the internet daily for interesting ideas for a newsletter. Often I come across a video, an unusual fact that sparks an idea. The link below shows a 10-month old binge watching "The Bee" movie with Jerry Seinfeld. His mother shared that he watches the movie 3 to 4 times per day. He enjoys the bright yellow and black colors. While the movie plays, he's happy and dancing in his bouncer. When the movie ends, he cries.

To view the clip, click on the link below. Inside Edition originally carried the story.

<http://www.msn.com/en-us/video/popculture/meet-the-baby-who%e2%80%99s-been-binge-watching-%e2%80%98bee-movie%e2%80%99-on-netflix/vi-BBH2GyJ?ocid=U220DHP>

This past summer I was shopping for flowers. I observed a parent handing her toddler an electronic device to watch while she shopped. The child appeared to enjoy whatever was playing.

I couldn't help but think what a wonderful place a nursery is to teach a child about colors and scents. A great opportunity to make a fun memory. Even though the toddler will not remember, you will. Also, little ones learn a lot by the tone of our voice, our laughter, and the smile on our face that this is fun thing! If, as parents and providers, we take the time to make a memory, years later when they enter a nursery, the colors and scents trigger a pleasant feeling.

Fact: We may not remember an event or incident, but our bodies never forget.

Opportunities come and go every day. These opportunities make up our life. Not only are children a precious gift, but so are we.

Before we know it, a child will be grown, and we will be old.

*Carolyn Jacobs*  
Referral Counselor



# Limit Screen Time



**Screen time is addictive and interferes with relationships.**

- 1) For young children, be careful about using the TV as a babysitter.
- 2) Do not allow computers or TVs or cell phones in children's rooms.
- 3) Make agreements with children about how much TV, video games, texting and internet time is reasonable.
- 4) Brainstorm fun alternative activities, that bring family members together.

Quotes from the Positive Discipline books © Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott

*Remember to limit your own screen time as well!*

## Why to Avoid TV for Infants & Toddlers



By: David L. Hill, MD, FAAP

Parents are often shocked when I tell them that pediatricians think it's a bad idea for children to watch TV or use mobile apps before age 18 months because most toddlers already have. Surveys tell us that 92.2% of 1-year-olds have already used a mobile device, some starting as young as age 4 months.

### Early Brain Development

I hear a lot of parents say, *"But my baby likes it!"* Infants may stare at the bright colors and motion on a screen, but their brains are incapable of making sense or meaning out of all those bizarre pictures.

**It takes around 18 months for a baby's brain to develop to the point where the symbols on a screen come to represent their equivalents in the real world.**

What infants and toddlers need most to learn is interaction with the people around them. That doesn't mean that they shouldn't video-chat with a distant grandparent or a deployed parent. When it comes to day-to-day learning, they need to touch things, shake them, throw them, and most of all to see the faces and hear the voices of those they love the most. Apps can teach toddlers to tap and swipe at a screen, but studies tell us that these skills don't translate into real-world learning. See [Healthy Digital Media Use Habits for Babies, Toddlers & Preschoolers](#).

### Where's the Harm?

Babies and toddlers don't get anything out of watching TV, but, if they seem to like it, where's the harm? If a little TV is what it takes for you to get dinner on the table, isn't it better for them than, say, starving? Yes, watching TV is better than starving, but it's worse than not watching TV. Good evidence suggests that screen viewing before age 18 months has lasting negative effects on children's language development, reading skills, and short term memory. It also contributes to problems with sleep and attention.

**If *"you are what you eat,"* then the brain is what it experiences, and video entertainment is like mental junk food for babies and toddlers.**

The problem lies not only with what toddlers are doing while they're watching TV, it's what they aren't doing. Specifically, children are programmed to learn from interacting with other people. The dance of facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language between a toddler and parent is not only beautiful, it's so complex that researchers

have to record these interactions on video and slow them down just to see everything that's going on. Whenever one party in this dance, child or parent, is watching TV, the exchange comes to a halt.

A toddler learns a lot more from banging pans on the floor while you cook dinner than he does from watching a screen for the same amount of time because every now and then the two of you look at each other.

Just having the TV on in the background, even if "no one is watching it," is enough to delay language development. Normally a parent speaks about 940 words per hour when a toddler is around. With the television on, that number falls by 770! Fewer words means less learning.

Toddlers are also learning to pay attention for prolonged periods. Toddlers who watch more TV are more likely to have problems paying attention at age 7. Video programming is constantly changing, constantly interesting, and almost never forces a child to deal with anything more tedious than an infomercial.

After age 2 things change, at least somewhat. During the preschool years, some children do learn some skills from educational TV. Well-designed shows can teach kids literacy, math, science, problem-solving, and prosocial behavior. Children get more out of interactive programs like *Dora the Explorer* and *Sesame Street* when they answer the character's questions. Educational TV makes the biggest difference for children whose homes are the least intellectually stimulating.

### What You Can Do:

Naturally, children learn more when they watch TV or use apps with a parent. Content matters a lot. All programs educate kids about something, but stick with ones that are designed to teach children stuff they should actually know like language and math.

**Regardless of content, cap your child's electronic entertainment time at 1 hour a day from age 18 months to age five.**

Remember, too, TV is still TV whether you actually watch it on a TV screen or on a mobile phone or computer.

### Additional Information & Resources:

- [How to Make a Family Media Use Plan](#)
- [Language Delays in Toddlers: Information for Parents](#)
- [Parents of Young Children: Put Down Your Smartphones](#)
- [How Do Infants Learn?](#)
- [Media and Young Minds](#)

### About Dr. Hill:



Pediatrician David Hill, MD, FAAP, is Vice President of Cape Fear Pediatrics in Wilmington, NC, and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at UNC Medical School. He serves on the executive committees of the North Carolina Pediatric Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and the Media. Dr. Hill won the Independent Book Publishers Association Benjamin Franklin Award in 2013 for [Dad To Dad: Parenting Like A Pro](#). He serves as a consultant on child care issues for local and national radio, television, and internet-based media. He lives in Wilmington, North Carolina with his wife, three children, and two step children.

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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics (Copyright © 2016)



## Fussy Infants & Toddlers Tend to Watch More Media, Starting a Lifelong Habit

Babies who have problems with self-regulation also tend to have more media exposure. Their parents may be especially likely to benefit from help with managing these aspects of their children's development, according to the study, "[Infant Self-Regulation and Early Childhood Media Exposure](#)" in the May 2014 issue of Pediatrics (published online April 14).

The authors describe self-regulation difficulties as problems with self-soothing, sleep, emotional regulation and attention. They looked at data from 7,450 children in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of children born in 2001, including information reported by parents at 9 months and 2 years of age. The researchers compared the children's rates of self-regulation problems and their rates of media use. They found that the infants and toddlers whose parents characterized as most fussy and having other self-regulation difficulties also had the most media exposure, even after accounting for other factors that influence these characteristics such as sociodemographic factors and home environment. It was not clear whether these children's use of media developed in response to their fussiness, or if media use somehow contributed to some of their self-regulation difficulties.

The authors noted that early childhood is a crucial time for forming lifelong media habits, and raised the possible benefit of interventions to help parents manage their children's difficult behaviors as well as manage their media diets for both amount and content.

### Additional Information:

- [How to Make a Family Media Use Plan](#)
- [Tablets and Smartphones: Not for Babies](#)
- [The Benefits of Limiting TV](#)
- [Why to Avoid TV Before Age 2](#)
- [Where We Stand: TV Viewing Time](#)

<https://healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Why-to-Avoid-TV-Before-Age-2.aspx>





Television, electronic devices, social media have a way of stealing our precious time. I don't know how many times I went online to check something out and it took a lot longer than I intended. Sometimes I log off without even checking what I went out there for in the first place.

I've let opportunities pass that I regret afterwards. I wish I had seized the moment. Then there are other moments, why did I agree to this? What was I thinking? These opportunities, regardless of the decision I made, make up my life.

We see it everywhere, in restaurants, stores, movie theatres, or driving/walking down the street. People using a cell phone or other electronic devices. They allow us more freedom, but, like everything in life, these devices come with a responsibility.

At work, I have what I call "my window on the world". One day, I watched a parent engrossed on the cell phone cross the street without looking. If she had, she might have noticed her child lagging about 20-25 feet behind. How the truck driver missed the little one, I don't know. It takes just a moment to become distracted, one headline to captivate our attention. One thing leads to another and before we know it, we're no longer paying attention.

There is a day care just down the street from us. I get to watch parents pickup their child. You can tell the little ones that are used to sharing their day, a new song learned, or their projects. They are excited and so are their parents. It's also kind of funny to see these grown men wear one of those little backpacks. (Dads are good about that. Moms not so much.)

*These are life's every day moments, every day opportunities.  
It's what we do with them that makes life special.*





## Infants and Toddlers "Unplugged":

New Recommendations about Media Use from the American Academy of Pediatrics

*By Lauren Lowry*

*Hanen Certified Speech-Language Pathologist*

It's hard to find a household nowadays without a television. It's getting hard to find a car without a DVD player. You can even watch TV and movies on a Smartphone. Electronic media is everywhere, and even the youngest children are exposed to it. Consider the following statistics:

- 90% of children under two years of age watch some type of electronic media.
- children under 2 watch an average of 1-2 hours of television each day.
- one third of children have a television in their bedroom by age 3.
- 39% of parents of young children report that the television is on in their homes for at least 6 hours per day.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) looked at the research on this topic to see the impact of electronic media viewing on children under age two. In November 2011, they published "Media Use by Children Younger than 2 Years" in the Journal *Pediatrics*. Here's what they found and what they recommend.

### What young children are watching?

- **Shows for children** - Parents generally feel more comfortable allowing their children to watch shows marketed as "educational". However, whether children are "actually learning something from these programs is questionable" (1, p. 1041-1042).
- **Shows for adults** - Many children are exposed to programs intended for adults when the television is left on while the children are in the room. This "has the direct effect of distracting a child during play and the indirect effect of taking a parent's attention away from the child".

## Can young children learn from “educational media”?

Seventy-five percent of the top selling infant videos claim to be educational (1). However, the AAP reports that there is no proof that media for children younger than 2 years is beneficial. They also state that **studies suggest that media use does not help children develop language skills.**

*Two recent studies found that watching shows like Sesame Street has a negative effect on language development for children under 24 months, and that two other studies did not show evidence of any benefit.*

### This is because:

- children 12 months and younger cannot follow the changing scenes on a screen or a program’s dialogue.
- 12-18 month olds are not able to learn and remember information as well from a video as from a live person.
- most of the content of educational media is not appropriate for children under 2. Young children generally do not understand the content, but are instead interested in the exciting colors, quick scene changes, music/sounds, and interesting characters.

The AAP reports that two recent studies found that watching shows like *Sesame Street* have a negative effect on language development for children under 24 months, and that two other studies did not show evidence of any benefit.

## How does electronic media affect development?

The AAP outlines the following ways that electronic media affects young children’s development:

- **Less interaction with parents** – “Children younger than 5 who watch television spend less time...interacting with parents or siblings” (p. 1042). The AAP points out that infant vocabulary growth is directly related to the amount of time parents spend speaking to them.
- **Health consequences** - In children under 3 years, television viewing has been associated with irregular sleep schedules (p. 1042). Poor sleep habits can affect a child’s mood, behavior, and concentration.
- **Less time spent reading books** – Children who live in households with heavy media use spend a lot less time being read to or looking at books. These children are less likely to be able to read in comparison to peers who live in households with low media use (p. 1042).
- **Language development** – Studies suggest that the more TV children watch, the more at risk they are for delayed language development. One study showed that children who started watching TV under 12 months of age and who watched TV for more than 2 hours per day were about 6 times more likely to develop a language delay than children who started watching TV after 12 months of age and/or watched less than two hours of TV a day. Another study found that for infants 8-16 months of age, each hour per day of viewing baby DVDs and videos was associated with a significant decrease on a test of vocabulary development. The research to date hasn’t proven that TV viewing causes the delay, only that there is a clear link between television viewing and language delay.

The AAP mentions that more research is needed to understand the effects of electronic media exposure on young children’s cognitive and emotional development. However, they also state that “there are ample reasons to be concerned” (p. 1042).

## Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics

- Avoid media use by children under age 2.
- If parents choose to expose their young child to electronic media, it's recommended that they:
  - review program content before letting their child watch it.
  - watch the program with their child (use it as an opportunity for conversation).
- Don't put a television set in a young child's bedroom.
- Avoid exposing a young child to adult-oriented television programs, even if the child is not actively watching it. This distracts both parent and child.
- Encourage independent, free play – when parents cannot actively play with their child (for example, when preparing dinner). Instead of turning on the TV, they should let the child play alone, while they are nearby. Independent play allows a child to think creatively, problem-solve, and accomplish tasks.
- Read and play together - “unstructured playtime is more valuable for the developing brain than any electronic media exposure” (p.1043). Playing and reading together fosters a child's cognitive and language development. The importance of interaction between child and caregiver cannot be understated.

## Introducing Media to Children

It's difficult to pinpoint an exact age at which children can benefit from electronic media. Current research suggests that “certain high quality programs have educational benefits for children older than 2 years. Children who watch these programs have improved social skills, language skills and even school readiness.” (p.1041). It seems that children's attention to televised programs improves somewhere between 1.5 and 2.5 years of age.

That's not to say that TV can substitute for parent-child interaction and play once a child turns two. Rather, it means that most children will be at a stage in their development when they can understand and learn from some high-quality programming. For children to get the most out of electronic media, the best approach is for parents to watch the program with the child, and to use it as an opportunity for discussion and interaction. Research continues to show that language-rich interactions between children and caregivers are what really support children's development.

## References

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*For more than 35 years, The Hanen Centre has taken a leading role in the development of programs and resources for parents and professionals to help all preschool children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills, including those children with or at risk of language delays and those with developmental challenges such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, including Asperger Syndrome.*



To be in your children's

*memories* tomorrow,

you have to be in

their lives *today.*

-Unknown