

MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: SCREEN TIME CAN AFFECT YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Screen time refers to the amount of time your child spends using a device that has a screen such as TV, computer, games console, tablet or smartphone. Technology can help support your child's learning and education by giving them access to information and educational tools and, in moderation, help children and teens stay connected to important people in their lives. "Recreational" screen use is the time your child spends on playing video/computer games, watching shows or video (YouTube, Netflix, TV), chatting (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram etc.), or sending text messages and using the internet.

According to the 2018-2019 RRDSB School Climate Survey, screen time use increases with age; however, the majority of students in Grades 4-12 (63%) report spending 2 or more hours per school day on recreational screen time.

Here are some ideas to help reduce the amount of time your child/teen spends on recreational screen time:

- Slowly decrease their recreational screen time until they are within the recommended daily limit (2 hours for children and teens aged 5-17)
- Have children and teens stop using screens at least 90 minutes before bedtime as this will help them get a better night's sleep
- Remove electronics from their bedroom in order to better monitor the amount of time they are on screens
- Model healthier screen time behaviour yourself and engage your child in physically active and/or social activities
- Talk to your children about their screen use and use parental controls to help keep your child safe while on the internet

Spending too much time in front of a screen can negatively impact your child's mental and physical health. Signs can include being sad, overly tired, withdrawn and uninterested in other activities with friends. These issues may have causes other than excessive screen time.

For more information, please contact the RRDSB Mental Health Leader: tracey.idle@rrdsb.com