

# Using Screen Time Without Guilt

Strategies for caregivers to manage screen time for children amidst COVID-19

Screen time for children has often been labelled a 'vice'. However this COVID-19 pandemic situation is unprecedented and the extent of its effects are wide-ranging.

With many families in survival mode during circuit breaker, **Dr Aishworiya Ramkumar**, Consultant at Child Development Unit, National University Hospital shares some tips to turn screen time into an asset.



Have a **balanced** schedule, such that your child gets adequate sleep, eats balanced meals daily and engages in play or leisure activities that do not involve digital devices.

Recognise that **technology is a huge asset** in today's digital age.

It facilitates learning and enables us to stay connected with loved ones. These tools help maintain normalcy for children during this period.



**Regulate** screen time exposure to specific times and duration as part of a daily routine.

A single 30-minute block of screen time every morning and afternoon will likely not have any lasting ill-effects on the child.



**Select what children watch** on the screen. Child-appropriate shows that illustrate good societal values will enrich the child.

General shows such as those on nature or discovery can be enjoyed by both parents and children together. Violent and action-packed content should be avoided.

**Co-view** with children whenever possible. This allows parent-child interaction and facilitates the children's understanding of the content.

Even if a parent cannot sit with the child throughout, they can ask for a summary after the show or check in at regular intervals.

**Choose appropriate games** or gadgets that build on children's memory, language or cognitive skills.

Avoid violence-heavy games or adult-directed games. Parents should be involved in selecting these games.

**Monitor the use of screen time** for older children. Social media has plenty of content on the pandemic that can lead to unnecessary anxiety and fears.

Cybercrime is also a real threat and can endanger personal safety.

**It is ok** to allow exposure in a mindful and balanced manner.



However, avoid screen time for children younger than 18 months old as far as possible.

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