TEENS & SCREENS

Screen Time During COVID

Parents Guide

www.abct.org & www.TeenBrain.info

COVID

The shelter-in-place mandate as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in enormous changes to the way we live, work, socialize and study.

With schools forced to close and offer online learning, and teens not able to leave the house, the amount of time spent using a devise is higher than ever.

As a parent, you may be concerned about the possible impact of too much screen time your teen.

35,000 research studies

Guide based on over 35,000 global studies on the impact of screen time on children.

Many teens are missing the social contact with friends and peers that school and after school activities offered.

Should you worry about excessive screen use by your teen during COVID?

Consider how the screens are being used not how much.

Ensure teens get enough sleep, do school work and do an online exercise class.

Screen time is a way to remain connected, reduce the sense of isolation and to get social support.

Teens may express it in different ways, playing an online game, doing an Instagram challenge or a Tik Tok dance.

350,000 children tested

Takeaway

High-quality research studies show the impact of screen time is negligible.
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Why You Shouldn’t Worry About Too Much Screen Time

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Statistics

In the US, the average 8 to 12-year-old spends under 5 hours per day on screen media (4:44), and a 13 to 18-year-old under 8 hours (7:22) — excluding time spent using screens for school or homework.

80% of teens personally have or have access to a laptop.

Phone Use & Texting

Over 90% of US teens have a cell phone, and report using it to keep in touch with friends, make plans, and to get to know others. With 75% using their phone to video chat with friends and family.

Up to 92% of teens send multiple text messages daily.

Research has shown that teens who reported sending more text messages reported feeling better (less depressed) than teens who were less frequent texters.

Social Media

Over 92% of teenagers are active on social media.

Girls are more likely to use social media than boys, particularly Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok.

There is limited evidence on any negative impact of social media on behavior, with some studies showing benefits from expressing thoughts and feelings, and receiving social support.

Experts indicate teens benefit from guidance on what they post online, as many are not aware of the permanence of posts even after they are deleted.

Brain Development

Between the ages of 10 and 24 years, the brain undergoes a period of pruning and maturation. The objective is to increase connectivity across brain regions and to cut back on brain pathways that are not being used.

Social interactions are a fundamental piece of healthy adolescent brain development.

The teen period is defined by friendships and social connections and preparing for adulthood. With social distancing guidelines in place, the teen’s need for social connection is greater than ever. Teens should be encouraged to remain in contact with friends and peers in any way they can, that is consistent with the COVID social distancing recommendations.

Mental Health

At the population level, there is little evidence that digital technology use is negatively associated with adolescents’ well-being.

A very limited number of studies show very small negative associations between the amount of daily digital technology use and an adolescents’ well-being, but do not distinguish cause from effect.

Any reported association between social media and depression is complicated by impaired sleep and lack of exercise on mood associated with being sedentary from device use.

Computer Games

Over 70% of boys report enjoying all types of gaming, including mobile games, computer games, and especially console video games.

Research evidence on the impact of computer games is mixed. Teens that engage in online games that are collaborative and involve playing in teams show greater social connections and skills.

Online gaming has been shown to increase a range of positive qualities including: responsibility, teamwork, a sense of belonging, creativity, multiculturalism, personal virtues and values, emotion management, learning new information and skills, improved motor skills development and professional orientation.

Teens should be discouraged from playing competitive or violent or aggressive games as these have been associated with negative behavior.

Virtual Learning

Teens are digital natives, and many are visual learners. Research has shown that recall and comprehension of interactive content is often superior to in-class teaching.

The quality of the educational content is robust, clarifies complex concepts and presents abstract ideas that are impractical to do in the classroom.

As many as 90% of teens report watching YouTube videos every day. Including content to support homework, school projects, learning a skill such as instrument or getting tips on a sport they play.