Implications of Screen Use in Young Children's Occupations

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**Introduction**

OTs need to address both the duration and quality of screen media children use, to promote their development and participation in healthy occupations.

**Trends in Media Use**

- 2/3 children and teens report their parents have “no rules” about media time (Strasburger et al., 2013)
- By 8 y/o, children are engaged in nearly 8 hours screen media each day (Strasburger et al., 2013; Lillard & Peterson, 2011)
- Children spend an average of 40 hrs/wk engaged in television, movies, and/or video games, which is more time than they spend in any other activity besides sleep (Gentile, Reimer, Nathanson, Walsh, & Eisenmann, 2014).
- 39% of children < 8 y/o live in homes where the television is left on all or most of the time, whether or not anyone is watching (Strasburger, Jordan, & Donnerstein, 2010).
- Conversely, when parents establish media rules, media use ↓ by ~3 hours (National Institutes of Health, 2013)

**Impact on Development**

**Attention**

- **TV:** Early television exposure (ages 1 and 3) associated with attention problems at 7 yrs (Christakis, Zimmerman, DiGiuseppe, & McCarty, 2004)

**Executive Functioning**

- **Fast-paced TV:** 9 mins of viewing → immediate negative effects on 4 y/o (Lillard & Peterson, 2011)

**Physical Health**

- ↑ screen time in early childhood is associated with ↓ time spent in physical activities & ↑ likelihood of being overweight or obese. (Gentile et al., 2014)

**Play**

- **Background TV:** ↓ toy play episode length and attention (Linebarger & Walker, 2005)

**Sleep**

- 90% of studies: adverse association between screen time and sleep (Hale & Guan, 2014)
  - Computer use (94%), Video Games (86%), Mobile Devices (83%), TV (76%)
  - Interactive has less adverse effects on sleep than passive screen time
- ↑ arousal levels depend on type of screen media → affect child’s ability to fall and remain asleep. (Hale & Guan, 2014)
- **Tablet use:** 2 hours exposure to bright screens contributes to ↓ melatonin (Hale & Guan, 2014)

**Social Skills**

- **Media violence:** is a causal factor in real-life violence and aggression (Strasburger, Jordan, & Donnerstein, 2012)
- Children showed disruptive behaviors when caregivers used a mobile screen device during mealtime (Radesky et al., 2014)

**Educational TV - Positive Impacts**

- ↑ vocabulary, school performance, & narrative language (Linebarger & Vaala, 2010)
- In adolescence → greater creativity, academic achievement, and decreased aggression (Anderson et al., 2001)

**Recommendations**

**AAP:** > 2 years old, < 2 hours recreational screen time/day
**NASPE Active Play Guidelines:** toddlers and preschoolers - at least 60 minutes/day; should not be sedentary > 60 minutes at a time
- Discuss media use and “screen time diet” with family/caregiver - include child
- Establish media limits in child’s weekly routines and during family time, with family/child co-viewing encouraged

Parents should actively mediate content and time (Gentile et al., 2014)
- Facilitate conversation during commercials
- Emphasize interactive, educational, and culturally diverse programming (ie: Sesame Street)
- Reduce/eliminate fast-paced TV, media during mealtime and before bedtime
- Discourage media use when friends are visiting

**References**


See additional references on reverse
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