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Screen Time Overtime: Should a “Screen Time Diet” be Part of Healthy Everyday Activities and Routines for Families and Their Young Children?

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Sarah Jamieson, OTS & Mary Muhlenhaupt, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA

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Introduction

Though television is still the primary form of media for children, almost one-third of TV programming is accessed through smart phones, tablets, and computers (Strasburger et al., 2013).

- Families do not adhere to AAP’s guidelines (Brown, 2011)
- Research suggests detrimental effect on young children

American Academy of Pediatrics:

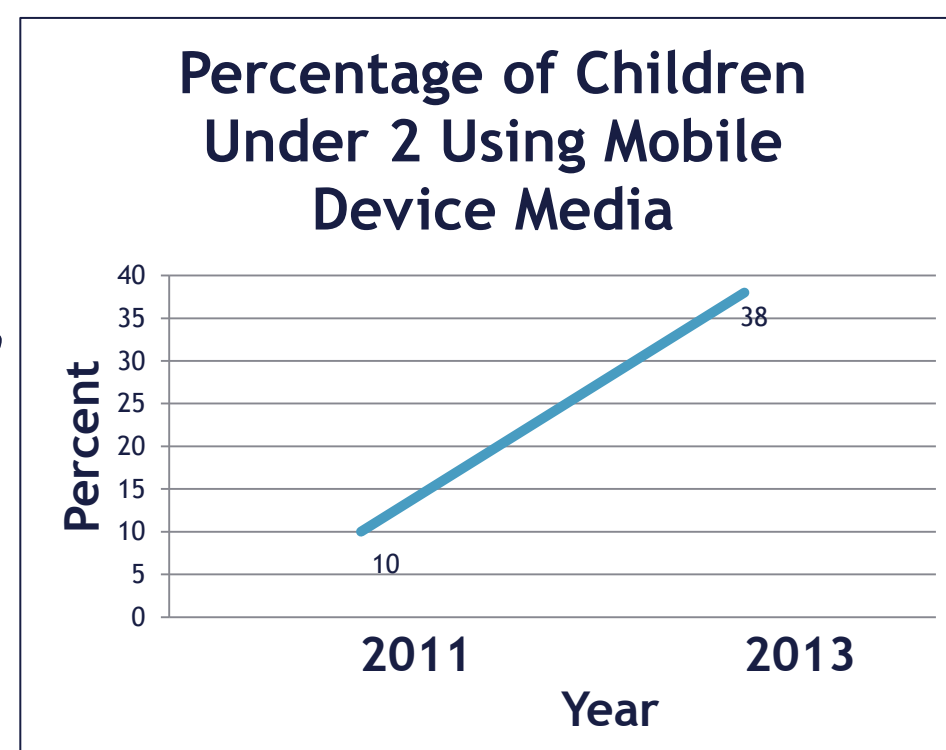
- No media for children under 2
- <1-2 hrs/day for children over 2

OT’s are an integral resource to help families design healthy recreational “screen time diets.”

Trends in Media Use

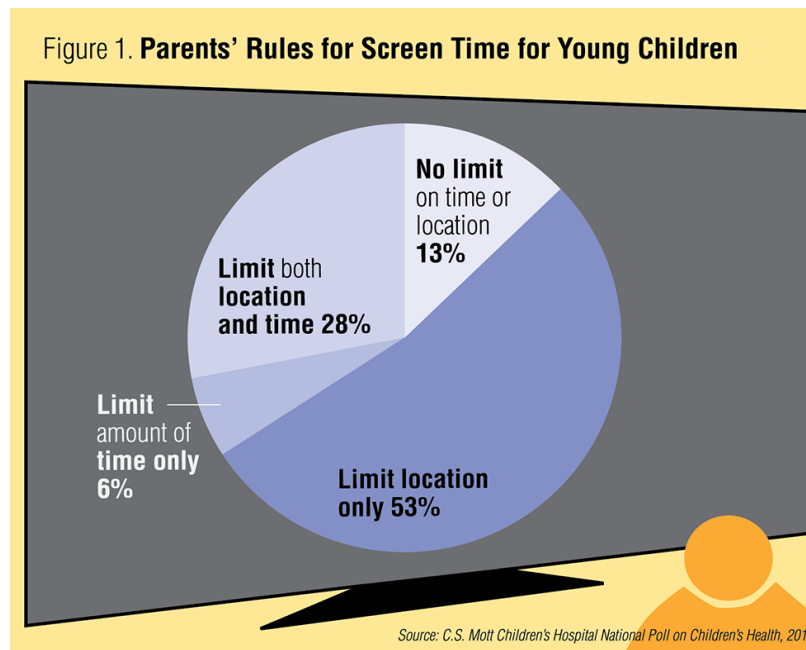
- Children < 2 years old watch 1-2 hours of television/day (Brown, 2011)
- Over 50% of 6-month infants exposed to at least an hour of media per day, (Tomopoulos et al., 2010)

- 28% increase in mobile device (smart phone, iPad, tablet) use from 2011 to 2013 (Common Sense Media, 2013)



- Parent’s negative concerns only related to TV consumption (Cingel & Krcmar, 2013)
- 55% of parents “not too” or “not at all” concerned about media (Wartella et al., 2013)

- Over 50% of parents limit screen time location, not duration (C.S. Mott’s Children’s Hospital, 2014)



Impact on Development

Language

- Media exposure at age 6 months → “lower” language development at 14 months (Tomopoulos et al., 2010)
- Each hr/day of baby DVD’s/videos in infants 8-16 months old → negative correlation to vocabulary acquisition (Zimmerman, Christakis & Meltzoff, 2007)

Cognition

- “Video deficit”: children < 2.5 have trouble processing screen information; live person, two-way exchange preferred (Kirkorian & Pempek, 2013)
- Longer daily media exposure → lower cognitive development (Tomopoulos et al., 2010)

Attention

- Hours of daily television viewing at ages 1 and 3 → attentional problems at age 7 (Christakis et al., 2004)
- Content of TV material related to later attentional difficulties in 3 year-olds (Zimmerman & Christakis, 2007)

Active Play

- Background TV → decreased attention to active play in 12, 24, and 36 mo. olds (Schmidt et al., 2008)

- Every hour of television → 9% less time spent in play for a child < 2 (Brown, 2011)

Family Connectedness

- Children who watch television without parents → less time with parents and siblings in other activities (Vandewater, Bickham & Lee, 2006)
- Lower-quality mother-child play with electronic versus non-electronic toys (Wooldridge & Shapka, 2012)

“Screen Time Diet” Recommendations

- Adhere to AAP guidelines for children < 2
- For children > 2:
 - Joint engagement
 - Establish appropriate contexts and routines for screen media use
 - Eliminate background media
 - Encourage pretend and unstructured, active play
 - NASPE Active Play Guidelines: toddlers and preschoolers at least 60 minutes/day; should not be sedentary > 60 minutes at a time

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See attachment for complete reference list

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