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National recommendations

National recommendations for the use of smartphones for children, adolescents and parents/caregivers

Justifications of the recommendations

Children under the age of 2 years should use no digital devices.

When small children are awake, also adults should avoid using smartphones. These recommendations support the development of linguistic, motor, and social skills among children.

Temper tantrums should be resolved with other means than digital devices.

When an adult verbalizes a child's feelings and comforts her, the child will gradually learn to deal with difficult feelings. The use of digital devices in comforting the child is associated with a greater risk of later conduct problems.

For children ages 2–6, daily screen time should be less than one hour, and content should be age appropriate.

Screen time and inappropriate content are associated with attention deficit, poor social skills, conduct problems, and delayed language development.

When going to sleep, smartphones should be left outside the bedroom.

In the evening, smartphones of all family members are gathered to a shared location. Phones are charged during daytime under supervision. A traditional alarm clock secures more peaceful sleep. When all smartphones are collected to the same place, parents/caregivers set an example to their children. Any exceptions are justified to the children.

Smartphones should be put out of sight when doing homework or when spending time with family or friends.

The mere presence of a smartphone hinders concentration and social interaction.

Parents' example is important.

Parents demonstrate their attitude towards smartphones through their own behavior. When we are together, we are without phones.

Purchasing smartphones should be delayed at least until teenage and use of social media until age 15–16.

During childhood and adolescence, brain development occurs through periods of sensitivity when learning certain skills is easier than before or after such a time. For the development of social skills and identity, the period of sensitivity is at age 9–15.

Adolescents and adults should limit daily smartphone use to 2–3 hours.

Also repeated smartphone pick-ups should be avoided because constant interruptions burden the brain. Greater use may increase mental health problems or supersede other more important activities. For brain health, live interaction and uninterrupted work are essential.