Simple Steps to Reduce Screen Time
Decreasing Screen Time Toolkit

Computers, TV, video games and smart phones are such a big part of our days now. Figuring out how to step away can be difficult. The following tips can help you decrease screen time.

- **Talk to Your Family**
  Explain to your kids that it's important to sit less and move more in order to be healthy. Explain this will also give them more energy, and it will help them develop and/or perfect new skills, such as riding a bike or shooting hoops, that could lead to more fun with friends.

- **Set Screen Time Limits**
  Create a house rule that limits screen time, for example, to two hours every day. More importantly, enforce the rule.

- **Lead by Example**
  Limit your own screen time to no more than two hours per day. If your kids see you following your own rules, then they'll be more likely to do the same.

(continued)

RESOURCES

Alliance for a Healthier Generation
healthiergeneration.org/live_healthier/
get_moving/decrease_screen_time/

WebMD
webmd.com/parenting/guide/kids-
screen-time#1

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/
wecan/

Let's Move
letsmove.obamawhitehouse.
archives.gov/

Great Schools
greatschools.org/gk/articles/managing-
your-childs-screen-time/

- **Log Screen Time vs. Active Time**
  Track how much time your family spends in front of a screen, including things like TV- and DVD-watching, playing video games, and using the computer for something other than school or work. Review physical activity levels. That way you'll get a sense of what changes need to be made. Use the **Recommended Amounts of Screen Time for Children**.

- **Make Screen Time = Active Time**
  When you do spend time in front of the screen, do something active. Stretch, do yoga and/or lift weights. Or, challenge the family to see who can do the most push-ups, jumping jacks, or leg lifts during TV commercial breaks.

- **Mandate Screen-Free Bedrooms**
  Kids who watch TV in their room tend to watch about 1.5 hours more TV a day than those that don't.

- **Make Meal Time = Family Time**
  Turn off all devices, including TV during meals. Family meals are a good time to talk to each other. Research shows that families who eat together tend to eat more nutritious meals, and that high-risk behavior in teens is reduced. Make eating together a priority and schedule family meals at least two to three times a week.

- **Provide Other Options**
  Watching TV can become a habit, making it easy to forget what else is out there. Give your kids ideas and/or alternatives, such as playing outside, getting a new hobby, or learning a sport.

- **Don't Use TV Time as Reward or Punishment**
  Practices like this can give TV an unnecessary degree of importance.

- **Understand TV Ads and Placements**
  Seeing snack foods, candy, soda, and fast food on television affects all of us, especially kids. Help your child understand that because it's on TV doesn't mean a food or drink is good for you. Get your kids to think about why their favorite cartoon character is trying to get them to eat a certain brand of breakfast cereal.

Decreasing screen time may be a difficult culture change. How we receive information, share information and communicate with each other has become reliant on sitting in front of a screen during the past decade. See a list of additional resources to help you and your family evaluate how much time you are spending in front of a screen and ways to decrease that amount if necessary on page 1. Remember your pediatrician and primary care provider are great resources too.
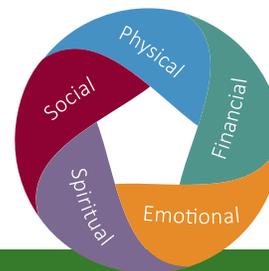
Helpful Hints on How to Sit Less and Move More[1]

Because so much of our work in front of a screen involves sitting, and research has shown that sitting too long negatively affects our health, the following are three helpful hints on how to decease how much we sit at work.

Stand while talking on the phone or eating lunch.

If you work at a desk for long periods of time, try a standing desk or improvise with a high table or counter.

Walk laps with your colleagues rather than gathering in a conference room for meetings.