

Kids, Screen Time, and Sleep

Kids in the U.S. are spending a lot of time in front of screens. They are watching TV, using cell phones, playing on game systems and using computers more than ever before. Today, children spend more time on screens than reading books or playing.

A 2010 report stated that youth from ages 8 to 18 are in front of screens over seven hours each day. The study showed that as screen time increased, sleep time decreased. Another study looked at 12- to 14-year-old students who were allowed to use computers or watch TV for long periods of time. The study found that these students did not get enough sleep and had lower grades in school.

Computers can be great for learning. But a Dutch study has shown that the Internet and computer games interfere with sleep as much as television does. A study of

overweight children found a link between screen time and obesity. When screen time was cut in half, the children lost weight.

Do you have a TV or computer in your bedroom? Research suggests this isn't a good idea. Children with a TV in their bedroom report more sleep problems. Instead of making children sleepy, screen time excites their brains. Any screen time after 7 p.m. increases sleep problems, as does viewing violent shows. The problems that result from too much screen time include difficulties with falling asleep, nightmares, waking during the night, difficulties waking up, and daytime sleepiness.

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that kids should be limited to two hours of screen time a day. What do you think? Do you think kids are willing to give up some screen time so they can sleep better and do well in school?

Source: This information was compiled from the medical journals *Pediatrics* and *Sleep*.

1 The average 8- to 18-year-old gets over _____ hours of screen time each day.

2 Name three kinds of activities or devices that are considered screen time.

3 List at least four facts that researchers have learned about screen time.

4 According to researchers, what is the total number of screen-time hours kids should be allowed to have each day? _____ hours

5 What happens to the brain during screen time? _____

6 Answer the question posed at the end of the article: Do you think kids are willing to give up some screen time so they can sleep better and do well in school?
