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Children & Screen Time Information for Parents

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As a parent, your constant worry is how to protect your child from the dangers of the world. We worry are they happy? Are they healthy? And we try to guide them through life with their best interests at heart. Sometimes though, despite our best intentions seemingly innocent aspects of their lives can be causing problems without us realising.



With the world becoming integrated more and more with technology, parents are finding their kids are being exposed more frequently, and at a younger age to computers, mobiles, laptops and tablets. Studies are showing that excessive computer and screen use has been associated with a greater risk of a child developing short-sightedness (myopia) as well as increased symptoms of eyestrain, headaches, blurred vision, dry eye and neck/shoulder pain. All of these symptoms can be related back to our eyes focusing up close for long periods of time. Reading from electronic devices requires more effort and creates great fatigue than hardcopy items such as books.

The ACBO (Australasian College of Behavioural Optometrists) is aware of the consequences of increased screen time and had some recommendations and guidelines for parents to help prevent vision and other problems from excessive screen use.

- Encourage moderation in screen time use each day:

Studies show that children who spend more hours a day on screens and less outdoors, are more likely to become short-sighted.

- Ensure good posture:

Devices should be no closer than the distance from your elbow to your chin. •

Never read lying on your stomach as the viewing distance will be much closer. Excessive use of mobile phone extremely close to your eyes can cause severe eye coordination problems.

- Change focus and take a break:

When reading an electronic book or document, encourage your child to look up as they turn the page. Setting a timer to remind your child to take a break. It is recommended to look away every 20 minutes of continuous near focusing, and taking a physical break for children under 9 years every one hour.

Stop before 1 hour before bed:

Studies show that screen use just before bedtime, can increase the risk of the child failing to fall asleep and stay asleep throughout the night.

Children who spend more time outdoors are less likely to become myopic, irrespective of how much near work they do, or whether their parents are Myopic. Outdoor time has a significant protective effect against developing some types of Myopia but it is not always easy to maintain.