

Can excessive exposure to screens affect cardiovascular health?

The digital world **came** to stay. It is a new situation for everyone...and step by step science is discovering the impact it **has** on our health and that of our children.

“Pros” and “cons” of the use of digital devices:



The use and access of digital devices and content have been linked to multiple benefits in children and adolescents.

-In the field of education, allowing access to **large amounts of knowledge** to large population groups through **new teaching methods**.

-In addition, it has become a tool that allows a **better connection with others** and opens new avenues for **socialization**.

-There are even several studies that show that the **proper use of many video games** increases the ability to **concentrate and problem-solving**.



However, the inappropriate use of these devices produces significant health problems.

Physical:

-Excessive use of screens, is related to **lower levels of physical activity** favoring the development of obesity, sleep disorders, and lower school performance.

-The use of some video games (mainly those involving violent actions) has been related to **increased heart rate and blood pressure values**, reaching values compatible with hypertension.

Mental:

-**Excessive or age-inappropriate** content consumption is associated with attention deficit disorder, decreased school performance, behavioral disorders, increased anxiety, aggression, and depression.

-Inappropriate consumption of video games and social networks has been linked to **addictions**.

Therefore, digital devices and content **are not the problem**, but how they are used. Science has shown that the best way to make healthy use of technology comes through a series of usage agreements within the family, involving not only the children but also (and mainly) the parents.

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Some tips to make good use of family devices and digital content in the family

- The World Health Organization recommends **0 hours of screen time** for children under **12 months**, and **no more than 1 hour** of screen time per day for children under **5 years**. This exposure time should be basically for **contacting family members**, never alone and with quality content.
- Above this age, there is no consensus on the time of leisure use of screens above which it is considered harmful, in general, it is recommended to **limit this time of use to less than two hours a day**.
- Screen-free zones**: establish places where it is agreed not to use screens. It is recommended that in the **rooms where you sleep there are no screens** (Tv, computer) and that individual devices (laptops, Tablet, mobile) are not carried. The use of screens **during meals** is also discouraged.
- Screen-free schedule**: avoid exposure as soon as you get up, during study time and at least one hour before bedtime.
- Know** the contents, applications, video games used by your children. As far as possible, encourage the use of screens in **common areas** or shared use by several members of the family.
- Security**: we must supervise the contents and contacts of social networks. Explain from a certain age that the contents accessed are not always what they seem and the possible dangers of social networks.

Tools to help regulate time and content on smartphones and tablets:

[Android \(Google Family link\)](#) / [IOS \(Screen Time\)](#).

[AAP digital plan](#): facilitating tool to establish a family digital plan.

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[Want to learn more about how to improve your child's cardiovascular health? Visit us at:](#)





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