

## The Danish Health Authority's Recommendations

# Screen use

## Recommendations for children, adolescents, and adults

### 1. Avoid screen use before bedtime

Sleep is essential for children's and adolescent's development and learning, as well as your mental and physical health. Using screens right before bedtime can delay the time it takes to fall asleep and result in not getting enough sleep. The "blue light" from screens can disrupt your natural sleep-wake cycle, and the many impressions from social media, video clips, movies, or gaming can prolong the time it takes to fall asleep. It's a good idea to create a calm and relaxing bedtime routine. You might, for example, read a book or listen to calming music. For toddlers and young children, this could involve reading a story together or singing a song.

### 2. Keep your phone and tablet out of the bedroom

Using screens during the night can disturb your sleep and leave you less rested the following day. Uninterrupted sleep is important for high-quality sleep, and the "blue light" from screens can shorten sleep duration or lower its quality. Getting enough sleep in both duration and quality is important for your mental and physical health. If your phone functions as an alarm clock, consider getting a traditional alarm clock instead and let your phone "sleep" in another room.

### 3. Dedicate time away from screens and prioritise physical activity

While screen time can be enjoyable and relaxing, it is important for your health not to let it dominate daily life at the expense of other essential activities, including physical exercise and face-to-face social interactions with friends and family. Movement and physical activity are particularly important for the motor development, physical, social, and mental health of children and adolescents. For adults, it plays a crucial role in reducing the risk of developing lifestyle-related diseases.

### 4. Be aware of social media use and its impact on your well-being

Social media can facilitate connections with friends and family in a busy daily life. It can also keep individuals informed on news, provide access to articles, and allow you to seek information. Gaming can provide a break from daily struggles, letting you play with friends. However, excessive time spent on screens, especially on social media platforms, may contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety, loneliness, diminished self-esteem, or social exclusion. If social media and gaming is having a negative impact on your well-being, it may be a good idea to spend more time on other activities, such as physical exercise, spending time with friends, or pursuing a hobby that is meaningful to you and positively influences your mood and daily life.

## Recommendations for parents with children living at home

*In addition to the four recommendations outlined previously, parents with children living at home should consider the following:*

### **1. Screen use for children under two years of age should be accompanied by active adult engagement**

Infants and toddlers do not need screens and will not experience negative consequences from avoiding them. They develop in a good way when people around them are present and engaged – for example by reading, singing, or engaging in physical play activities. If you do use a screen with your child, it is important to actively participate in the activity to support their development. This could involve reading stories from the screen, looking at family photos, watching short cartoons together while discussing them, or making video calls to family members and friends.

### **2. Minimise personal screen use when you are with your child**

Your screen habits can affect your relationship with your child, for example by making you less attentive to their needs. Young children need to feel seen, heard, and understood. Think about whether you should reduce your own screen use when you are with your child. Moreover, children tend to model their behavior on that of their parents and other close adults, so remember that you are a role model. Your screen habits influence your child's habits.

### **3. Take an interest in your child's digital activities**

Your child may have positive experiences with screens but can also encounter unpleasant ones. Just as it's important to talk about the good experiences with screen use, it's equally important that your child feels they can talk to you about any worries or negative experiences. Be mindful of any concerns your child may have about being excluded or missing out online, and make sure to talk openly about it.

### **4. Establish agreements within the family on screen use that apply to both adults and children**

It's important that the adults in the family agree on the screen time rules at home. Your child looks to you as a role model and mirrors your behavior — including your screen habits. Having open conversations about how much time you spend on screens and for what purposes is important. Agree on when the family should have screen-free time. It can be during meals or shared activities, where screens are not needed. Examples can also be visits to the playground or family events where full attention is important.