Logan Winkelman, Ph.D.

What are some health problems that might be associated with excessive screen time?

0:06

Excessive screen time, I think since we have entered this digital era has just been something that has increasingly been challenging. And so some of the things that are coming out in the literature number one is digital addiction, right? We're addicted to these devices, we were talking about how these platforms can have are set up to kind of play on those dopamine receptors. And so being addicted to these devices, and screen time is a real thing. And so that can lead to other challenges, because we may not be engaging in other activities, or it could be a coping mechanism. So that can lead to other things like anxiety and depression. I think another thing to think about is the physical symptoms of excessive screen time. So that can be like eyestrain, that can be neck strain headaches, but one of the number one physical ailments is sleep disturbance. So especially if people are scrolling on their phones for hours, on end, right into bedtime. Not only is that disrupting our sleep, but it's keeping our mind awake.

How does excessive screen time affect sleep?

1:12

If we're on our phones, when we're trying to go to sleep, or we're nearing sleep, or while we're in bed, the being on our screens can keep our mind active when it's trying to wind down and slow down. The other piece is blue light. So blue light actually interferes with our melatonin. So melatonin is the hormone that allows us to feel sleepy and stay asleep. So if the blue light is interfering with that melatonin production, it can actually physiologically affect your ability to sleep.

Will children copy their parents screen habits?

1:44

If adults around children are on their phones, or on their tablets are looking at screens constantly, they'll learn to prioritize technology over other activities or even relationships. And this can impact their development, it can impact their social skills, it can impact their attention span. And that can lead to other things like behavioral issues. And so it's really important that adults model having time limits or appropriate use of technology so that we're not modeling just the constant use of technology because all of our kids they're watching, they're watching and they're imitating and that's how they learn.

What are healthy screen times for children, teens, and adults?

2:24

The literature basically states that children between the ages of two and five get less than an hour of screen time between six and up, it's stays consistent at no more than two and it stays the same also for adults. But think about that, two hours for adults, if you're working at a job where you're sitting in front of a computer all day, and then you get into your car that has a digital screen in front of you and then you get home to watch a movie or you're on your phone.

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I mean that's really difficult to try to limit to that. So what I would say is for children, definitely younger than two years old, we want to limit it altogether. But between two and five, we definitely want to limit it below to two hours. And then for us that are working or even at school children are on computers at school now too. And so sometimes it's hard to limit that

habit. And so it will take time to break that habit. So be gentle with yourself. But if you can limit it, try to do that because that again sets the tone for the rest of the day.

Anything else to add?
6:14

I think the only thing is to understand that everything in moderation, right? Technology is not evil technology brings us wonderful things and immense convenience. And so it's not about vilifying technology, but understanding our habits around it and understanding that a lot of technology is designed to suck us in and to designed to capture our attention. And so we need to take control of what we decide to give our attention instead of kind of mindlessly doing it. And so it doesn't mean you can't have social media or you can't look at things or watch movies, it's just be aware of it. Be aware of how much time you're spending on it and try to implement some other more mindful activities to allow you to have that balance. So I would say the easiest way to do that is to integrate breaks every once in a while just maybe every 30 minutes while you're on your screen. Try to take a break whether it's setting an alarm for 30 minutes to even just stretch, look outside, maybe even just look around your room. You don't even have to get up some people don't have that luxury of getting up every 30 minutes, but if you can try to implement those things.