

CHILD SCREEN TIME IN TEXAS

Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living

Texas children are sedentary.

Screen time is a proxy for prolonged sedentary time. Screen time includes time spent watching television, playing video games, or using an electronic device with a screen such as a smartphone or tablet. The World Health Organization's screen time recommendations¹ change based on a child's age. Screen time is **not recommended** for children 1 year old or younger. Screen time should be no more than **1 hour per day** for children 2-4 years old.

Screen Time Crisis



Having a television in a 2nd grade student's bedroom varies by race/ethnicity: **73.5%** of African Americans and **62.7%** of Hispanics have one compared to **28.7%** of White/Other.²



36.0% of 2nd graders have a computer, tablet, phone, or gaming console in their bedroom compared to **68.8%** of 4th graders.²



41.6% of 8th graders play 2 or more hours of video or computer games daily, outside of school hours.²

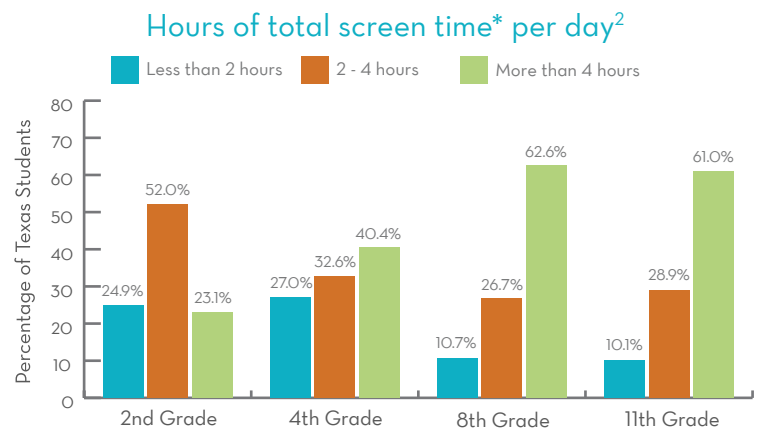


12.6% of 11th grade boys spend 6 or more hours playing video or computer games daily, outside of school hours.²

Current and Lifetime Risks

Sedentary behaviors including screen time duration and frequency have **negative health associations**⁴:

- Increased obesity and overweight
- Higher clustered cardiometabolic risk scores
- Decreased physical activity
- Lower self-esteem



*Total screen time includes television, computer, tablet, smartphone, and videogames outside of school time and schoolwork

How we can improve Texas children's sedentary time

- Develop a family media plan to help balance digital and real life from birth to adulthood⁵
- Designate media-free times together as a family, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms³
- Limit eating in front of screens⁶
- Limit sitting for more than 60 minutes without getting up⁷

Current Screen Time Guidelines

The World Health Organization¹ recommendations change based on a child's age:

Infants (less than 1 year): **Screen time is not recommended.**

Children (1 year of age): **Sedentary screen time is not recommended.**

Children (2-4 years of age): **Sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better.**

The American Academy of Pediatrics³ recommendations change based on a child's age:

Infants (less than 18 months): **Avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting.**

Children (18-24 months): **Parents who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programming, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they're seeing.**

Children (2-5 years): **Limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.**

Children (6 years of age and older): **Place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.**

References

1. WHO guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age. *The World Health Organization*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/24-04-2019-to-grow-up-healthy-children-need-to-sit-less-and-play-more>

2. School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project. Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. SPAN project details available online at go.uth.edu/SPAN.

The School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project is a surveillance system monitoring the prevalence of overweight/obesity in school-aged children in Texas conducted by researchers at the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living. SPAN has been funded by the Texas Department of State Health Services since 2000 to conduct height and weight measurements across different grade levels.

3. AAP Announces New Recommendations for Children's Media Use. *American Academy of Pediatrics*. <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>

4. Carons, Valeria, et al. Systematic review of sedentary behaviour and health indicators in school-aged children and youth: an update. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*. 41:S240-S265. (2016)

5. Family Media Plan. *American Academy of Pediatrics*. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>

6. Robinson, Thomas N., et al. Screen Media Exposure and Obesity in Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics*. 10.1542/peds.2016-1758K. (Nov 2017)

7. Knell, Gregory, et al. Prevalence and Likelihood of Meeting Sleep, Physical Activity, and Screen-Time Guidelines Among US Youth. *JAMA Pediatr*. 173(4):387-389. (2019)

About the Texas Child Health Status Report

This project is funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. These reports utilize state-level data from the School Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) Project to provide an accurate representation of Texas child health.

Learn more at go.uth.edu/TexasChildHealth

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