Halloween 2019

Parents,

Do you know that health experts recommend reducing your child’s screen time and exposure to electromagnetic radiation (EMR) from cell phones? Children are becoming addicted to cell phones, affecting their physical and mental health. This letter contains health expert recommendations for parents on screen time and cell phone use.

You can try turning off the wifi at night and see how much better you and your children sleep.

Best wishes,  
Mark Graham

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The **California Department of Public Health** issued recommendations on December 13, 2017 on how people can reduce their exposure to a form of electromagnetic radiation called radiofrequency (RF) energy. CDPH recommends:

Don’t sleep with your phone in your bed or near your head. Unless the phone is off or in airplane mode, keep it at least a few feet away from your bed.

Regarding children CDPH says:

* Children may be more at risk for harm from exposure to RF energy because: RF energy can reach a larger area of a child’s brain than an adult’s brain.
* A child’s brain and body grow and develop through the teen years. During this time, the body may be more easily affected by RF energy and the effect may be more harmful and longer lasting.
* A child who uses a cell phone will have many more years of exposure to RF energy in his or her lifetime than someone who started using a cell phone as an adult.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Cell-Phone-Guidance.pdf>

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** (AAP) wrote to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and FDA in 2013 regarding electromagnetic radiation limits. AAP wrote:

“As radiation standards are reassessed, the AAP urges the FCC to adopt radiation standards that:

Protect children’s health and well-being. Children are not little adults and are disproportionately impacted by all environmental exposures, including cell phone radiation. Current FCC standards do not account for the unique vulnerability and use patterns specific to pregnant women and children. It is essential that any new standard for cell phones or other wireless devices be based on protecting the youngest and most vulnerable populations to ensure they are safeguarded throughout their lifetimes.”

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/7520941318.pdf>

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** recommends cell phone safety tips for families:

* Use text messaging when possible, and use cell phones in speaker mode or with the use of hands-free kits.
* Make only short or essential calls on cell phones.
* If you plan to watch a movie on your device, download it first, then switch to airplane mode while you watch in order to avoid unnecessary radiation exposure.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Cell-Phone-Radiation-Childrens-Health.aspx>

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** recommends for screen time:

## **The AAP policy statement offers recommendations for parents and pediatricians, including:**

### **For Parents:**

* Parents can model effective “media diets” to help their children learn to be selective and healthy in what they consume. Take an active role in children’s media education by co-viewing programs with them and discussing values.
* [Make a media use plan](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/How-to-Make-a-Family-Media-Use-Plan.aspx), including mealtime and bedtime curfews for media devices. Screens should be kept [out of kids’ bedrooms](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Sleep-and-Mental-Health.aspx).
* [Limit entertainment screen time](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Setting-Limits-on-Media-Use-Audio.aspx) to less than one or two hours per day; in children under 2, discourage screen media exposure.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/Managing-Media-We-Need-a-Plan.aspx>

**Governor Gavin Newsom** signed into law AB272 on July 1, 2019, a bill on students’ use of smart phones. The bill says:

**SECTION 1.**

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) There is growing evidence that unrestricted use of smartphones by pupils at elementary and secondary schools during the school day interferes with the educational mission of the schools, lowers pupil performance, particularly among low-achieving pupils, promotes cyberbullying, and contributes to an increase in teenage anxiety, depression, and suicide.

(b) In September 2018, France adopted a nationwide smartphone ban in all primary and middle schools in order to promote pupil achievement and healthy social development.

(d) Dr. Jean Twenge, who is a professor of psychology at San Diego State University, published a book in 2017 entitled “iGen,” which presents evidence of an increase in depression and suicide among American teenagers that may be caused by increased mobile device screen time and social media use. According to Dr. Twenge, 8th grade pupils who spend 10 or more hours per week on social media are 56 percent more likely to describe themselves as unhappy than those who devote less time to social media. Moreover, teenagers who spend three hours per day or more on electronic devices are 35 percent more likely to demonstrate risk factors for suicide, such as suicidal ideation, and teenagers who spend five or more hours per day on their devices are 71 percent more likely to demonstrate a risk factor for suicide.

<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB272>