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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.

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 screen time to two hours. So my recommendation is in alignment with what the literature states is take frequent breaks, try to limit the exposure to screen time for children and teens and even for ourselves as adults. But when we're using screens, making sure that we're taking breaks, because we need to give our eyes a break, we need to get out and have fresh air. And we definitely need to limit it when it when it comes time to bedtime because again, those negative effects on our sleep are really detrimental.

How can someone working on screens all day wind down from screen time?
3:47

It's exhausting for our eyes, the posture that we have to take when we're sitting at our desk. And then when we come home, think about how we unwind. We either go we change, we might eat something and then we sit on our couch and we're either watching Netflix, or we're watching our phones on social media. And so my recommendation is to take breaks, take intentional breaks from technology and do non screen activities such as exercise, cooking a meal, reading a book, a physical book, not a Kindle, where you're, you know, reading, still reading on a digital screen. And then limiting yourself especially around bedtime, it's really important that we allow our bodies to wind down because our circadian rhythm which is our sleep rhythm affects so much of our biology, so much of our psychology, that we don't realize it and so if we're mindlessly scrolling for hours on end, when we get home, it's really affecting our health.

How can people start their day with less screen time?
4:46

If the moment you wake up, you're looking on your phone and immediately you start getting flooded with emails or the news or social media. You haven't even allowed your brain to really wake up and already you're flooding it with information overload. And so my recommendation is to if you use your phone as an alarm, like we all do, set it across the room, when you go to bed at night, set it across the room. So then when you hear that alarm, you have to wake up and turn it off. And before you do anything else, do the rest of your routine. So before you start looking and scrolling and checking email, allow yourself to have a calm and relaxing morning routine. So that could be like brushing your teeth, drinking a glass of water, doing some stretches, doing some breathing, getting ready for work, or school or whatever it may be, be really cognizant about your mornings, because that starts the rest of your day. And so we want to be intentional about that. So again, trying to limit the exposure, especially if you do nothing, just try not to check your email and social media the first thing. Even I know, clients and people that that check it while they're in bed, they turn off their alarm, and they pull it up. And that sets the tone for the rest of the day. And so try to get out of that habit. And remember, it is a

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.