

## Technology/screens and the effects on young people

As we are moving into a fast pace technology era, some researchers are concerned about the impact this is having on our children's emotional and physical health.

For example, children are spending long periods of time unsupervised in their bedrooms whilst they are on their x-box, Netflix or screens, reducing their ability to be able to socialise, having less face to face time with family and friends.

Moreover, optometrists are now seeing more eye sight problems at a much early age in young people due to young children and teenagers spending large amounts of time on screens, iPads and technology. They advised to have breaks frequently from screens, to rest the eyes and go outdoors.

In addition, researchers are concerned that the two hours of iPad time can decrease the melatonin production in the body and therefore can delay sleep at night.

Being on screens, including iPads at night before bed, effects the production of melatonin, which is a hormone that tells your body its time to sleep, helps to make you sleepy and regulates the body clock or circadian system. These are major concerns for our children, so as parents what can we do?

- ◆ Have regular family dinners together, without technology or TV in the background.
- ◆ Plan at least one family event on a regular basis with your children, outdoors if possible away from screens or the temptation of screens.
- ◆ Limit screen time, screen time is not a human right, it is a privilege, put age appropriate time limits on screens, including x-box, Netflix, YouTube, iPads.
- ◆ Regular breaks from screens and limited use before bed will help with sleep problems and late nights. In my experience children need to be off screens especially iPads at least one hour from bedtime. Removing iPads and mobile phones from the bedroom at night is often the only choice parents have to ensure young people are getting a break from the screens. If you are concerned that your child does have a problem with sleep try the above suggestions or speak to your GP.

