

Youth and Screen Use

What parents & guardians need to know

What's happening in Wellington Dufferin Guelph:



Students reporting 3+ hours of screentime outside of school per day:
Grades 4-6: **50%** Grades 7-8: **74%** Grades 9-12: **86%**

The recommended maximum recreational screen time for Canadian youth is 2 hours.



Children that use screens 3+ hours/day are nearly **4x more likely** to develop nearsightedness



45% of Grade 9-12 students spend more than 2 hours/day on social media. **35%** of Grade 7-8 students



43% of youth report being distracted. This has increased since 2023



Nearly **1 in 4** youth report being cyberbullied. This has increased since 2019



Nearly **1 in 4** Grade 7-8 students play video games more than 2 hours/day
1 in 5 Grade 9-12 students

What it can mean for young people:



Overuse of screens can disrupt family time, reduce physical activity, and increase loneliness.



Youth who spend more than 2 hours/day on social media report lower self-esteem and higher psychological distress.



Excessive screen time is linked to sleep disruption, academic struggles, anxiety and depression.



Cyberbullying and online risks (e.g., body shaming, exploitation) can lead to emotional trauma and social withdrawal.



Youth can turn to screen distractions as a means of coping with stress due to friends, family or school.

Parents & Guardians: 3 Step Strategy

1. Observe

- Notice if your child is on their phone a lot when it is not necessary
- Watch for signs of screen overuse: sleep issues, neglected homework, irritability, or withdrawal
- Be alert to signs of cyberbullying or risky online behaviour

2. Engage

- Talk openly and often about screen habits and online experiences
- Ask questions about what they're watching, playing, or who they're chatting with
- Discuss the risks of excessive screen time and online safety together

3. Lead

- Model healthy screen habits — limit your own use and avoid using screens as rewards
- Create a family media agreement and set screen-free times/zones
- Encourage outdoor time, hobbies, and family activities that don't involve screens
- Try a Digital Detox together — unplug, reset, and reconnect
- Help your child find support if there is a problem



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