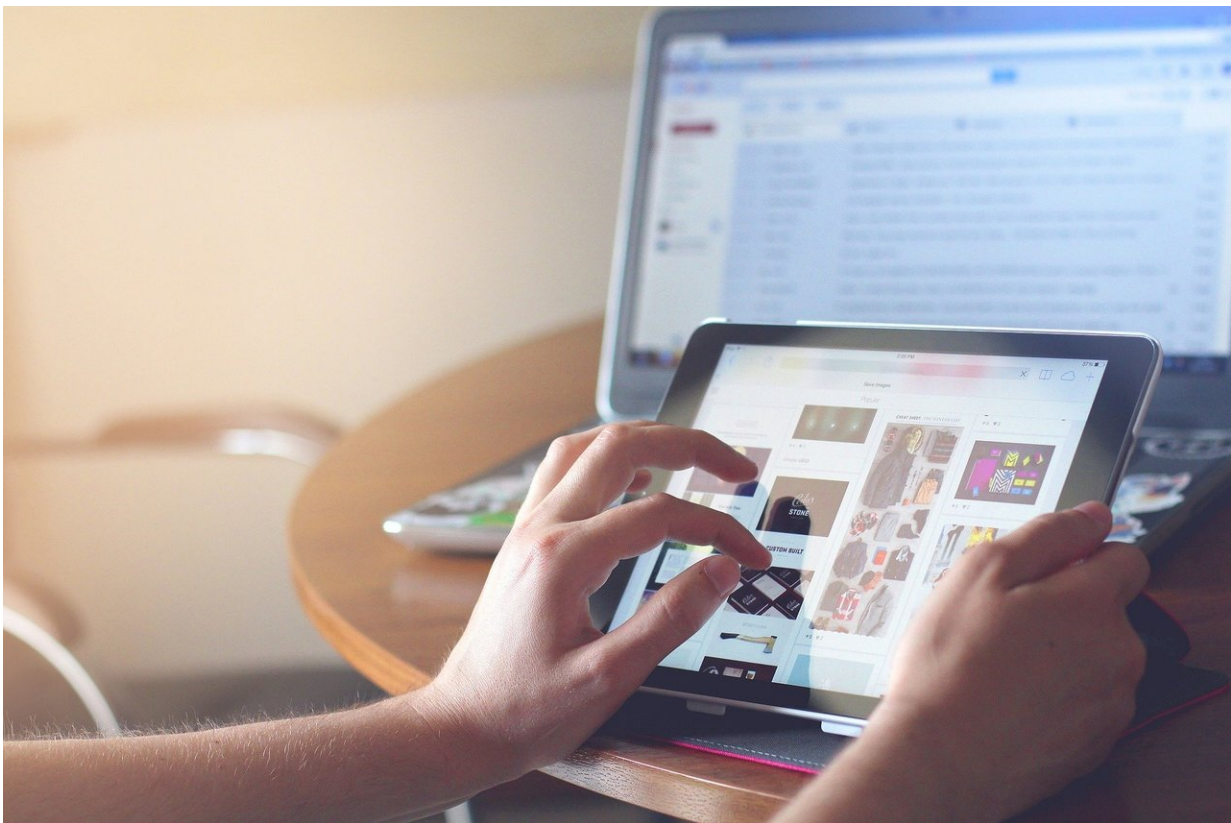


Balanced advice needed to address 'screen time' for children, study shows

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Parents, health professionals and educators need clear and balanced information to help manage young children's use of mobile touch-screen devices in Australia, new research by Curtin University has found.

The research, published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, suggests there is a need for more consistent information on appropriate digital [technology](#) use that addresses health, well-being and educational development of [children](#), and supports decision-making by parents, educators and health professionals.

Lead researcher John Curtin Distinguished Professor Leon Straker, from the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Curtin University, said the research reviewed the conflicting [guidelines](#) currently available in Australia.

"Education and industry authorities encourage the use of digital technology by young children to prepare them to thrive in the digital world, while health authorities discourage the use and raise concerns about the potential negative effects on children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social well-being," Professor Straker said.

"Our research reviewed the conflicting messages by education and health authorities, provided through current digital use guidelines such as the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years, that leaves parents feeling guilty and professionals feeling conflicted.

"We found that the current national guidelines provided in Australia consisted of conflicting information, philosophies, priorities and processes, making it difficult for health professionals and educators to give valuable and balanced advice to parents on the use of digital technologies."

The study identified the necessary steps to advance practice, policy and research to provide greater consistency in advice. One such step was to separate sedentary behaviour guidelines from digital technology use guidelines, as this would enable clearer guidance on reducing health risks

from sitting for prolonged periods by children and better guidance on ways children can use digital technology wisely to gain benefits without harm.

Professor Straker explained that the research has important implications for the development of young children in a globally expanding environment.

"The use of touch screen devices in the current world is ubiquitous and it is important to address both the positive and negative effects of [digital technology](#) for [young children](#)," Professor Straker said.

"Our findings may be of interest to health providers, family doctors, along with educators and other professionals, who are in an ideal position to help families more successfully navigate through this rapidly evolving digital world."

More information: Leon Straker et al. Conflicting Guidelines on Young Children's Screen Time and Use of Digital Technology Create Policy and Practice Dilemmas, *The Journal of Pediatrics* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2018.07.019](#)

Provided by Curtin University

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