

More screen time for babies could slow development

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Too much screen time can lead to developmental delays in babies,

researchers say.

When 1-year-olds viewed screens for more than four hours a day, they had delays in communication and problem-solving skills when assessed at ages 2 and 4, according to a new study published Aug. 21 in *JAMA Pediatrics*.

They also had delays in fine motor and [social skills](#) at age 2, though that gap was gone by age 4, researchers.

It may not be the screens, but what they replace, a Yale expert said.

Face-to-face interaction between a parent and child gives babies information about language and meaning through [facial expressions](#), words, tone of voice and physical feedback, said [David Lewkowicz](#), a developmental psychologist at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Conn.

"It doesn't happen when you're watching the screen," Lewkowicz told the *New York Times*.

For the study, Japanese researchers led by [Ippei Takahashi](#) of Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan, asked nearly 7,100 parents of young children to answer questions about development and screen time.

More screen time meant greater likelihood of seeing delays.

About 4% of the babies in the study had four or more hours of daily screen time, while 18% had two to four. Most had less than two hours.

Mothers of babies with high levels of screen time were more likely to be younger, first-time moms, with less education and lower incomes and household education. They were also more likely to experience

[postpartum depression](#), the study found.

It didn't compare entertainment versus educational screen time. The authors suggested future studies should do that.

"Talk to your child as much as you can, face-to-face as much as you can," Lewkowicz said he tells parents when asked how much screen time their [babies](#) can have.

It's not practical to say they should withhold all [screen time](#), he told the *Times*.

"No parent would listen to that. It just has to be in moderation. With a heavy dose of real-life [social interaction](#)," Lewkowicz said.

More information: Ippei Takahashi et al, Screen Time at Age 1 Year and Communication and Problem-Solving Developmental Delay at 2 and 4 Years, *JAMA Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.3057](#)

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has more on [screen time and children](#).

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