

Ask the Pediatrician: How can I help my children develop healthy digital habits?

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Social media plays a huge role in the lives of many children and teens, serving as a virtual meeting place for friends, a source of entertainment

or a learning tool. But for some, social media can become all-consuming, stress-inducing or even unsafe. It's helpful for families to step back and take a look at how each member spends time on devices and interacting with social media.

The American Academy of Pediatrics National Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health offers resources for families, clinicians and educators. These include a Q and A portal, where anyone can ask questions about social media and children's mental health that pediatricians and other experts will answer. For example, how do I set limits around technology when our family has never had any? How do I know if my child's social media use is problematic? Is YouTube appropriate for my four-year-old?

There are 12 tips for families based on practices that researchers have identified to help ensure children and teens' use of [digital devices](#) remains a healthy and safe way to connect with others and the world around them:

Sometimes the problem is not what children are doing on [social media](#) —but what they're NOT doing instead. All children need time for physical activity, personal interaction with family and friends, nutritious meals and adequate sleep. We encourage children to be involved in creating a plan that balances all those important activities in their day.

For more information, go to AAP.org/socialmedia or HealthyChildren.org.

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Citation: Ask the Pediatrician: How can I help my children develop healthy digital habits? (2023, October 16) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-10-pediatrician-children-healthy-digital-habits.html>

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