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How to Reduce Your Screen Time

Streaming shows and videos have become a daily ritual for most adults and children, especially now that cellphones, tablets and wireless networks allow you to view pretty much whatever you want whenever and wherever you want.

Unfortunately, watching too much on our electronic devices promotes habits that may be damaging to your health. These habits include abnormal or inadequate sleep, being sedentary, snacking on unhealthy foods, and mindless eating. Health experts recommend limiting screen time to two hours or less a day. If you are in the habit of watching more than that, consider the following tips:

- **Create a viewing schedule.** Prioritize your favorite programs and turn the device off when they end.
- **Don't watch at meal times.** Studies have shown that families who eat together tend to have more nutritious meals.
- **Make the bedroom television-free.** Television watching can cut into sleep time that our bodies need.
- **Plan activities outdoor.** Take a walk around the neighborhood, try hiking in a nearby state park or take a family bike ride.
- **When watching a show or movie, be active.** Stretch or practice yoga poses. During commercials, do jumping jacks, push-ups or sit-ups.
- **Don't replace your old favorites with new shows.** If you don't start watching, you won't know what you are missing.
- **Track the amount of time you spend in front of the screen.** Being aware of your habits can help you see where room for improvement exists.
- **Cut down on the number of channels you have.** More channels equals more choices. Hide channels or downgrade your cable or satellite packages.
- **If you watch television to relax, try an alternative relaxation activity.** Take a hot bath, read a book or meditate.
- **Develop new hobbies to fill your down time.** Try planting a garden or learning a new skill.

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