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MAY 2011 | THE SCIENCE BEHIND RAISING MEDIA SMART KIDS

Springtime and Screen Time

Children's spring schedules can be action-packed, with year-end concerts, parties, test prep, and final exams. A little parental guidance can make a big difference when kids are learning to balance screen time and other activities. Explaining that it's about health, not about right and wrong, can make it easier to have those conversations. The [Center on Media and Child Health](#) resources can [help parents help kids](#), and teaching kids to [manage media time](#) is a step in the right direction.

The Research

Two new studies look at screen-time and subsequent behavior. To find out more, search the [CMCH Database of Research](#). This tool provides research scientists, clinicians, educators, media producers, and parents with access to the current state of knowledge on media and child health.

- **Within the field of health promotion, chatbots have the potential to reach a variety of adolescents and provide them with answers to their questions related to sex, drugs, and alcohol.** [See this study: Chatbots promoting adolescent health](#)
- **Canadian study results suggest that youth who reported the highest amount of screen time, especially computer time, were significantly more likely to engage in risky behaviors.** [See this study: Screen time, risky behaviors](#)

The Questions and Answers

Drawing on his experience as a parent, pediatrician, professor, and filmmaker, [Dr. Michael Rich](#) answers parents' questions about media and health. Encouraging families to *enjoy their media and use them wisely*, Dr. Rich shares science-based answers and practical solutions on [Ask the Mediatrixian](#).

- [How much TV is too much TV?](#)
- [Is the Kindle OK for tweens?](#)
- [Are smartphone apps in the classroom a good thing?](#)

The Tips

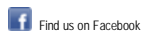
YOUNGER KIDS: When it's media time, make smart media choices readily available. Just as leaving a bowl of brightly colored fruit sitting in the kitchen can inspire kids to make healthy food choices, providing easy access to wise media options inspires healthy media choices. Try leaving a science magazine on the counter, watch a family documentary, bookmark your favorite educational websites, and record [television programs that inspire](#) interest in topics that will serve your child well in the future.

OLDER KIDS: Teach time management. First, have your teen list all after-school activities and how much time they take. Don't forget to include showers, commuting, meals, chores, jobs, family, and sleep. When it comes to documenting media time, list ACTIONS, not MACHINES. Two hours on the laptop is vague, while 30 minutes of socializing, 1 hour of homework, and 30 minutes of leisure [Internet](#) viewing focuses on the activities themselves. Then, have your teen rank activities in order of importance, with consideration for due dates. Finally, help your teen create a schedule that supports healthy habits, genuine connections, and personal goals.

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