

Babies as Young as Twelve Months Get Nearly an Hour of Screen Time a Day, Study Finds

By [Alyson Klein](#) on December 2, 2019 4:26 PM

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Babies as young as twelve months are exposed to nearly an hour a day of screen time, despite warnings from pediatricians to avoid digital media exposure for children under a year and a half, according to a new analysis released by the National Institutes of Health, the University at Albany, and New York University Lagone Medical Center.

And 3-year-olds spend more than 150 minutes on screens per day. In fact, 8-year-olds spend less time on screens than their younger counterparts, just under an hour and a half day. Researchers suggest that could be because older children have already started school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screens at all for babies and toddlers under the age of 18 months. And they suggest slowly incorporating screen time for children aged 18 to 24 months. Children ages 2 to 5 should have no more than hour of screen time per day, the academy suggests.

"Our results indicate that screen habits begin early," said Edwina Yeung, the study's senior author, in a statement. "This finding suggests that interventions to reduce screen time could have a better chance of success if introduced early."

NICHD researchers and their colleagues analyzed data from the **Upstate KIDS Study**, which followed kids born after infertility treatments in New York state from 2008 to 2010. It surveyed parents of nearly 4,000 children on their kids' media habits when they were 12, 18, 24, 30, and 36 months of age, as well as 7 and 8 years old.

It's not clear what impact this early screen time has on students' K-12 outcomes. But recently, **scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress declined** in both fourth grade and eighth grade reading, leading experts to question whether excessive screen time could be having an impact on students' long-term reading skills.

What's more, **a recent study by Common Sense Media** found that 8-to-12-year olds spend nearly five hours a day on screens for entertainment. Teens spend nearly seven and a half hours on screens. (That doesn't account for time spent doing school or homework.)

And researchers have **warned that too much screen time can contribute to developmental delays**, in part because students who are looking at screens aren't getting the chance to explore their environments.

So which kids are likely to get exposed to the most screen-time? The researchers classified children into two groups based on how much their average daily screen time increased from age 1 to age 3. The first group, 73 percent of the total, has the lowest total increase, from an average of about 51 minutes a day to about 1 hour and 47 minutes a day. The second group, 27 percent of the total, had the highest increase, from 37 minutes a day of screen time to roughly four hours a day.

Children whose parents had only a high school diploma were more likely to be exposed to more screen time, as were children of first-time mothers. Twins were also more likely to be in the highest screen time, compared to singleton children. And children in home-based care, whether provided by a baby-sitter, parent, or relative, were more than twice as likely to be in the higher screen time group, compared to kids in

center-based care.

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