

Technology and Children

1 Are there any significant health issues to watch out for when children become fascinated by technology and gadgets?

Since technology is so addictive - there is even something called the internet addiction syndrome - children who spend time a lot of time on laptops or iPads are less inclined to go out and play outdoor games. There is reduced interest in sports as well as going out to play in the sunshine with other children. This leads to many health issues including weight gain or obesity problems. Secondly, lack of sunshine exposure causes Vitamin D deficiency which leads to weakness and fatigue. Since physical exercise is minimal their cardio-respiratory conditioning is poor. When children watch TV or use the computer late into the night and they sleep much less. Lack of sleep then leads to headaches, day time tiredness, a reduced ability to concentrate and increased weight gain. It is during sleep that one's muscles and nerves grow so growth and brain development get affected due to reduced sleep patterns. The constant staring at screens may also cause vision related issues.

2 Are there any psychological issues parents may have to deal with when their children become dependent on technology?

Since gadgets and technology have the potential to make every minute exciting, there is a tendency of kids to have a lower attention span when it comes to things which require much greater mental involvement, such as studying or solving

math problems or putting together pieces of a puzzle.

3 Are there any medical recommendations or national norms about children and technology?



HEALTH FILE

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Though there are no national recommendations in India, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of two years watch no television and that television viewing be limited to one to two hours per day in older children.

4 What should parents do for their children to have a healthy relationship with technology?

Parents need to set down rules and regulations for their kids at an early age. A clock can be placed near the TV, and time limits should be set. If a child already suffers from "digital addiction", then long conversations, setting household rules and gradual weaning can be attempted. It is also important that parents create alternatives to the internet or the TV, for example, putting them in swimming or tennis lessons, taking them to the park where they can play with other kids, enrolling them in a local library. It is also very important for parents to follow the same rules themselves so that they are not just switching on the TV and telling their kids not to watch it.