



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens and Screen Time

October 2014

The average teen only spends three hours per day watching television; however, the total hours spent in front of a screen equal more than five hours per day. In fact, total time spent in front of a screen averages between five and seven hours per day. The National Institutes of Health describes screen time as “a sedentary activity spent in front of any type of screen (TV, iPad, computer, phones, video games, and other electronic devices).”

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states, “by the time of high school graduation, [children] will have spent more time watching television than they have in the classroom.”

The effects of too much screen time vary and can cause a lifetime of health issues, including:

- Obesity
- Irregular sleep
- School difficulties
- Behavioral problems
- Impaired academic performance
- Violence
- Less time for play

HOW MUCH TIME DO SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN TEENS SPEND IN FRONT OF A SCREEN?

The 2013 Department of Public Instruction Youth Risk Behavior Survey reached 5,354 Southwest Wisconsin 7th through 12th grade youth.

- 19% of the surveyed participants reported spending three or more hours per day, on the average school day, watching television (see Chart 1).
- More than 43% of 7th and 8th grade youth reported spending two or more hours per day on an average school day playing video or computer games or using a computer for something other than school (see Chart 2).

- Roughly 30% of high school students in grade 9-12 reported spending three or more hours per day on an average school day playing video games, or using the computer (see Chart 3).

Chart 1: Percentage of teens who watched television 3 or more hours per day on an average school day.

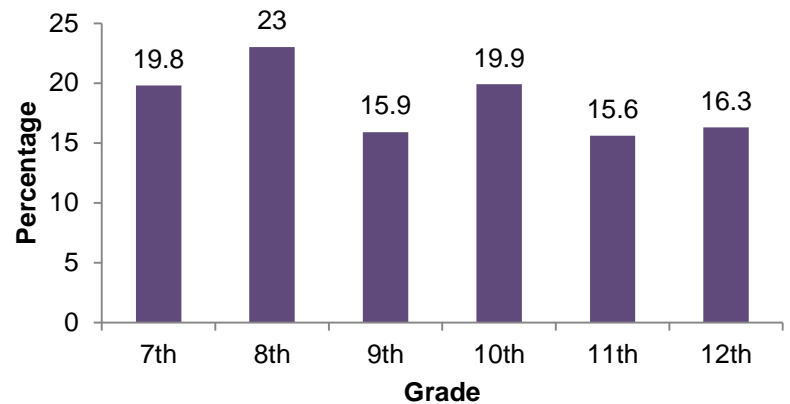
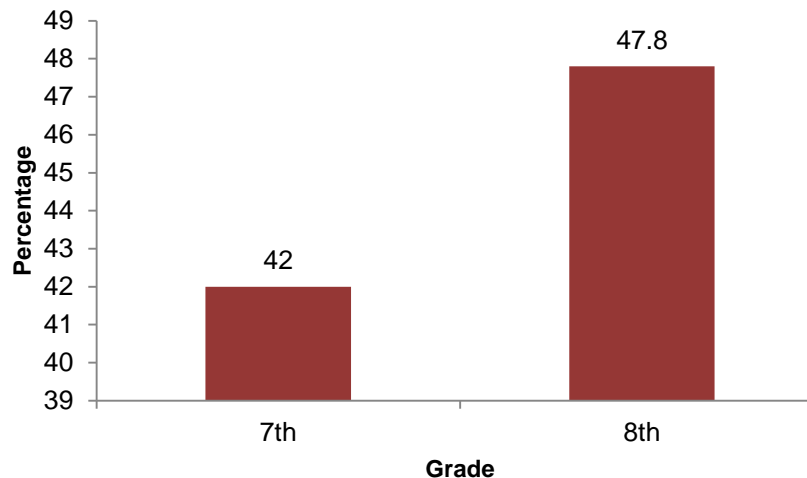


Chart 2: Percentage of 7th & 8th grade youth who played video or computer games or used a computer for something that was not school work TWO or more hours per day on an average school day.



Numerous studies have found that over usage of electronics positively correlates to sleep-related problems. Teens with TV's in their rooms often go to bed later and sleep less than those without TV's in their rooms. Parents are encouraged to completely eliminate TV, computer or cell phone usage the hour before your teen goes to bed.

Chart 3: Percentage of high school students who played video or computer games or used a computer for something that was not school work THREE or more hours per day on an average school day.

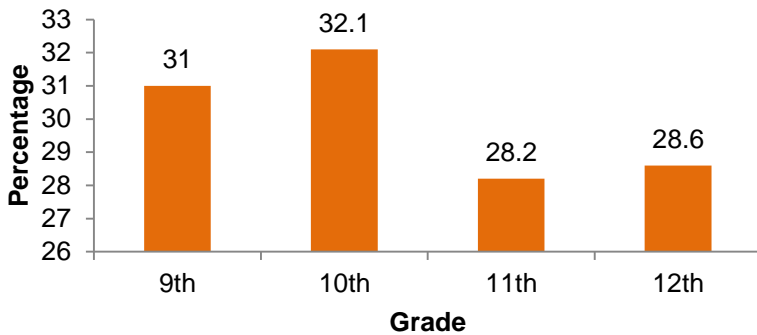
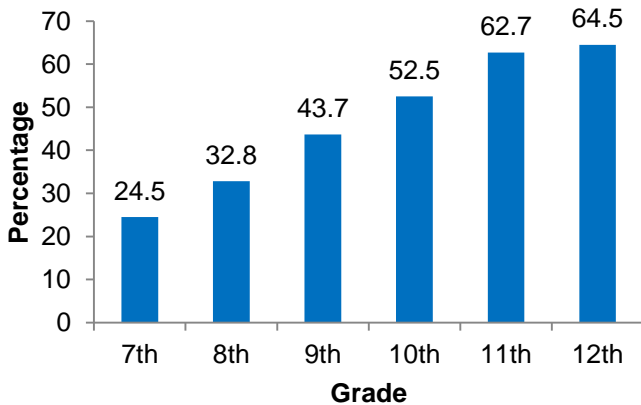


Chart 4: Percentage of teens who get fewer than 8 hours of sleep on an average school night.



Spending too much time using electronics can also cause teens to get fewer hours of sleep. According to Chart 4, 10th, 11th and 12th grade youth receive the least amount of sleep out of all those surveyed. By 10th grade, many youth are excited to take on one major responsibility – driving! A legal driving aged-teen spending too much time watching television, playing on the computer, going to bed late, and getting too little sleep, may be putting themselves in serious danger. The National Sleep

Foundation states, “drowsy driving causes over 100,000 crashes each year. When you are sleep deprived, you are as impaired as driving with a blood alcohol content of .08%,” which is illegal in the state of Wisconsin.

PARENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- **Eliminate background TV**
- **Keep TVs and computers out of the bedroom**
- **Don't eat in front of the TV**
- **Set school day rules for screen time**
- **Suggest other activities**
- **Set a good example**
- **Unplug it**

Parent: “I’m tired of arguing and wasting energy to manage screen time. It’s easier to just give in and let their brains rot!”

Solution: Use a timer. Make it clear that it is their responsibility to turn screens off when the timer goes off. If they require a verbal reminder to “turn off,” then they lose their next screen time period. Easier said than done? Yes, but if you commit and they know the self-regulating expectation, they’ll get it! Screen time periods can also be used as rewards (i.e. when you get your chores done). One parent stated, “[screen time] is pure recreation time, not an entitlement. Their recreation shouldn’t be work or aggravation for me. If it becomes that, it’s gone.”

SO...WHAT’S YOUR LIMIT?

According to the National Institutes of Health, teens should be spending no more than **two** hours per day watching TV, playing on the computer, using their cell phones, or playing video games.

Resources:

- Dell’Antonia, K.J. (2014). *Weekly Quandary: Revisiting limits on screen time*. New York Times. <http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com>
- Kaneshiro, N.K. (2013). *Screen time and children*. National Institutes of Health. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>
- Mayo Clinic. (2013). *Children and TV: Limiting your child’s screen time*. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/childrens-health>

“Parents Make a Difference” is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a program of the Department of Public Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Extension and local school districts. This newsletter is adapted from the UW-Extension newsletters “Whose Kids?...Our Kids!” This issue of “Parents Make a Difference” was written by Jennifer LaTour, UW-Extension Richland County and reviewed by Bev Doll and Sarah Hopkins, UW-Extension Grant County; Amy Mitchell, UW-Extension Crawford County, Lori Berget, UW-Extension Lafayette County and Ruth Schriefer and Deb Ivey, UW-Extension Iowa County. Thanks are extended to nearly 5,354 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2013 YRBS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information: Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; Crawford County (608) 326-0223; Iowa County (608) 930-9850; and Richland County (608) 647-6148. Or visit the website at: <http://www.cesa3.org/yrebs.htm>