SAFER USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR CHILDREN DURING DISTANCE LEARNING

The purpose of this fact sheet is to help parents navigate the challenges of increased and unavoidable digital usage during this time. Provided below are a few, easy-to-use tips to safeguard children's health by maintaining safe use of technology at home. Also attached are links to important references/research.

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY RELATED

1. Using Hardwired Connections: For faster, reliable and secure internet connectivity, it is preferable to use hardwired connections (cords /ethernet LAN cables / adapters) for personal computers, printers, audio speakers, headphones, microphones, smartphones, mice, keyboards, etc.
Ref: EHTrust.org/How-to-Hardwire
For a more detailed understanding:
Ref: Set-up-a-low-emf-safe-tech-computer-workstation

2. Maintaining Distance From Router: If you are using a Wireless network/Wifi router/Hotspot, sit as far away from the router and the transmitting device as possible. Distance is the key to reducing detrimental health effects, including problems with *sleep, attention span, memory, immunity,* etc.
Ref: Parentsforsafetechnology.org

More Tips:
- Turn off device when not in use.
- Hotspots and Wifi routers should be turned off when not in use, especially during the night.
- Disable all applicable wireless antennas including Cellular, Wifi, Mobile hotspot, Siri, Bluetooth and Location on devices when not in use.
- To reduce radiation exposure, devices should never be placed on the lap, near the child while sleeping, or held in their hands while using.
- Place laptops in such a way that keeps the child's head as far away from the laptop screens (where the antennas are) as practicable.
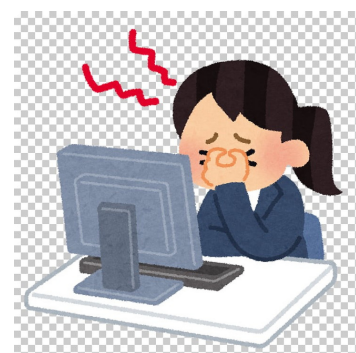
COMPUTER / LAPTOP RELATED

3. Reducing Eye Strain: Turn off blue light in the computer settings. Also, wherever possible, consider using screens designed to *reduce eye strain* - e.g., bigger external monitor, LCD screens (flicker free / without pulse-width modulation) etc.
Ref: Health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy
Ref: Turn off blue light for Mac (Mac)
     Turn off blue light for PC (PC)

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ERGONOMICS RELATED

4. Proper posture: Proper seating ergonomics needs to be kept in mind, as use of devices creates *poor posture* and *computer-induced musculoskeletal disorders*.
Ref: https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle
Ref: https://support.apple.com

TIPS TO HELP BALANCE SCREEN TIME

Screen Time: Children 6 years and older should have established and consistent limits on the time spent using technology. Parents should ensure that screen time doesn't take the place of sleep, physical activity or real-life personal interactions.
Children should not sleep with electronic devices in their bedrooms and should avoid screen time for 1 hour before bedtime.
Ref: American Academy of Pediatrics: Healthy children and Screen time
Ref: Children's Action network/Effects-on-Health

Digital Safety: Parents should have ongoing communication with children about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline, avoiding cyberbullying and sexting, being wary of online solicitation, and avoiding communications that can compromise personal privacy and safety.
Ref: Commonsense media: K-12 digital citizenship curriculum

The above information is compiled from research and best safety practices for children's digital study environments from: American Academy of Pediatrics, Mayo Clinic, Harvard health study, Environmental Health Trust, Parents for Safe Technology, Children's Screen time Action Network, Commonsense Media, Apple and Microsoft Support.