Media Use & Your Child

**Benefits of Media Use**
- Stay connected with friends and family.
- Enhance creativity through the sharing of ideas, music, and art.
- Meet and interact with others who share similar interests.
- Research school projects and communicate with teachers.
- Play interactive games.

**Risks of Media Use**
- Excessive media use has been associated with obesity, lack of sleep, school problems, aggression and other behavior issues.
- The media can be a hub for cyberbullying.
- Personal information (name, birthdates, interests, school name, location etc.) can be easily shared online which can make youth easy targets for online predators.
- Youth may receive online advertising or access to websites that are not age appropriate (e.g. – one missed keystroke “legs” instead of “lego” can direct kids to a slew of websites which may contain inappropriate material).

**Start Talking** Get involved in a way that helps your child understand you respect their privacy but want to make sure they are safe.

**Monitor Media Use** Become familiar with any media your child is involved in (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc.) and monitor their use and interactions.

**Promote Family Values** Co-view TV, movies, and videos with children and teenagers, and use this as a way of discussing family values. Spend time together online to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.

**Set Clear Rules** Establish a family home use plan for all media (for example: enforce media free meal time and a bedtime “curfew” for media devices, etc.). Limit the amount of total entertainment screen time to <1 to 2 hours and discourage screen media exposure for children < 2 years of age.

**Role Model** Set a good example. Your own interactions with technology can go a long way toward helping your kids use media safely.

Studies show that children who watch five or more hours of TV per day are much more likely to try cigarettes and alcohol.

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**Sources:**
- Teaching Kids to Be Smart About Social Media (Kidshealth.org – from Nemours); reviewed August 2014.
- How to Make a Family Use Media Plan (Healthychildren.org – from AAP); last updated May 5, 2015.
- Internet Safety (Kidshealth.org – from Nemours); reviewed January 2015.