Wellness Wednesday

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Big Screen-Time Myths That Need To Be Busted

In today's increasingly digital world, the topic of screen time for children has become a contentious issue, with experts and parents alike grappling with conflicting guidelines and concerns. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization have issued recommendations to limit or eliminate screen time for young children, but the reality is that screens have become so integrated into our daily lives that completely avoiding them is often impractical, if not impossible. As a result, many parents find themselves navigating a minefield of myths and misconceptions when it comes to managing their children's screen time.

Myth 1: All Screen Time is Dangerous

One of the most pervasive myths surrounding screen time is the notion that any and all exposure to digital devices is inherently harmful. However, the truth is that the impact of screen time on children's development is far more nuanced. Screens can be used in a variety of ways, from passive consumption of content to interactive and educational experiences. While excessive or unstructured screen time can indeed have negative consequences, it's important to recognize that not all screen time is created equal.

Categorizing Screen Time Activities

To better understand the impact of screen time, it's helpful to consider the different ways children may engage with digital devices. Common Sense Media suggests categorizing screen time activities into the following groups:

- Passive: Watching videos or engaging in mindless scrolling.
- Interactive: Playing games or solving puzzles.
- Communication: Video chatting or using social media.
- Creation: Engaging in digital art, music, or coding.

By recognizing these distinctions, parents can make more informed decisions about the appropriate use of screens for their children, rather than simply imposing blanket bans.

Potential Benefits of Certain Screen Time Activities

Contrary to the belief that all screen time is detrimental, research has shown that some forms of digital engagement can actually have benefits. For example, game-playing ability has long been correlated with intelligence, and there is a relationship between playing video games and improved fluid IQ. Additionally, screen-based activities can provide valuable opportunities for social connection, especially in gaming communities where children can find friends and support.

Myth 2: Time Limits are the Way to Moderate Kids' Screen Use

While setting time limits on screen use can be a useful strategy, it's not the only or even the most effective way to manage children's digital engagement. The quality and content of the screen time are often more important than the pure duration. If a child is using a device for educational or creative purposes, such as coding or digital art, the time spent may be more valuable than if they're mindlessly scrolling through social media.

Monitoring Usage is Essential

Rather than relying solely on time limits, experts recommend that parents take a more active role in monitoring their children's screen use. This involves regularly checking in on the activities they're engaging with, ensuring they're still socializing in-person, and making sure there is still time for electronic-free play and activities.

Conversations About Screen Use

For older children, it's important to have open conversations about how screens make them feel and the potential impact on their well-being. Sharing your own experiences and strategies, such as unfollowing accounts or taking social media breaks, can help guide your child towards healthier digital habits.

Myth 3: It's Watching the Screen That's Damaging to Kids

While the passive consumption of content on screens can indeed have negative consequences, particularly for young children's language development, the real issue may be what kids are missing out on when they're distracted by digital devices. The research suggests that the lack of real-life, interactive moments where language development naturally occurs is a more significant factor than the mere presence of screens.

The Impact on Language Development

Studies have shown that higher screen time is associated with poorer vocabulary and grammatical skills in young children aged 2.5 to 4 years, with video games having the strongest negative impact. Interestingly, no form of screen use, including co-viewing with parents or socializing through screens, was found to benefit language development.

Prioritizing Face-to-Face Interactions

The key, then, is to ensure that screen time does not replace valuable direct interactions with family members, such as active play, book reading, storytelling, and other developmentally appropriate activities. By focusing on maximizing these face-to-face and play-based experiences, parents can help foster their children's language and social-emotional development, even if some screen time is present.

Myth 4: If Kids are Using Educational Apps or Doing Online Research, Then They're Learning

The availability of educational technology and the EdTech market's growth have led many parents to believe that any screen-based activity with an educational label is inherently beneficial. However, the reality is more complex. Just because a child is using an educational app or conducting online research doesn't necessarily mean they are learning effectively.

The Importance of Adult Guidance

Significant guidance from a well-trained and responsive adult is crucial for a truly educational experience. Without this adult supervision and real dialogue, technology can quickly lose its educational value, as children may find ways to complete tasks or obtain scores without truly engaging with the content.

The Risks of Unsupervised Digital Learning

I've witnessed many instances where children have completed "projects" by simply copy-pasting text from websites they didn't even read, or by blindly hitting the right combination of keys to mark a task as "complete." This type of superficial engagement undermines the educational potential of digital tools, highlighting the need for active parental involvement and oversight.

Identifying the Underlying Issues

The biggest signs of excessive screen time may not be the battles over device usage, but rather the problems that arise in other areas of a child's life. These can include academic performance issues, decreased socialization, isolation, increased moodiness, disturbances in physical health, sleep, or appetite. Understanding the root causes of these problems, rather than just focusing on limiting screen time, is crucial for addressing the underlying issues effectively.

The Importance of Open Communication

When a child is exhibiting concerning behaviors related to screen time, the most important step is to have open, non-judgmental conversations to understand the driving factors. Bullying, academic struggles, or boredom may all contribute to excessive screen use, and the solutions to these problems will vary significantly. By fostering open communication and a deeper understanding of the child's experiences, parents can better support their child's overall well-being.

Myth 5: Adults' Screen Use is a Separate Issue

One of the most challenging aspects of managing children's screen time is the fact that adults' own digital habits can have a significant impact on their children's behavior. It's all too easy for parents to engage in mindless scrolling, answer texts during family time, or use their phones in bed, but these habits can undermine the efforts to set healthy boundaries for their children.

Modeling Healthy Screen Habits

To effectively guide children towards healthier digital behaviors, parents must first examine their own screen use and set clear boundaries for the entire family. This includes creating screen-free zones or times, as well as establishing a balanced schedule that includes physical activities, homework, family interactions, and intentional screen time.

The Importance of Consistency

By setting consistent boundaries and creating a unified approach to screen use, parents can foster healthier habits that last a lifetime. Children are more likely to respond positively to screen time limits when they see their parents adhering to the same rules, creating a sense of fairness and shared responsibility.

In the ever-evolving landscape of digital technology, it's essential to move beyond the simplistic myths and misconceptions that often surround children's screen time. By recognizing the nuances of how screens are used, the potential benefits of certain activities, and the importance of active parental involvement, families can navigate this complex issue with a more informed and balanced approach. By prioritizing quality over quantity, fostering open communication, and modeling healthy digital habits, parents can empower their children to develop a positive and constructive relationship with technology that supports their overall well-being and development.

Crustless Pumpkin Pie

INGREDIENTS

2 15-ounce cans pumpkin puree
1 cup coconut milk, full-fat canned
¾ cup pure maple syrup
6 large eggs
1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice
1 lemon, zest of
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 pinch sea salt
Dairy-free whipped cream for serving, optional

As the crisp autumn air sweeps in and the leaves begin to change color, the longing for cozy, comforting treats becomes irresistible. One classic fall favorite that never fails to satisfy the senses is pumpkin pie. However, the traditional version, with its buttery crust and sugar-laden filling, can be a bit heavy on the waistline, especially during the indulgent holiday season.

The Benefits of a Crustless Pumpkin Pie

Pie crusts, while delicious, are often high in calories, fat and carbohydrates due to the flour, butter, and sugar used in their preparation. By eliminating the crust, you can significantly reduce the overall calorie and carb content of your pumpkin pie, making it a more healthy dessert option.

Gluten-Free and Dairy-Free

Many traditional pumpkin pie recipes call for ingredients like wheat flour and dairy products, which can be problematic for individuals with gluten or lactose intolerances. The crustless pumpkin pie, on the other hand, can be easily adapted to be both gluten-free and dairy-free, allowing those with dietary restrictions to indulge in the seasonal treat.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 ramekin, Calories: 124.5 kcal, Carbohydrates: 25 g, Protein: 5 g, Fat: 7 g, Saturated Fat: 4.5 g, Cholesterol: 111.5 mg, Sodium: 63.5 mg, Fiber: 2.5 g, Sugar: 3.5 g

INSTRUCTIONS

How to Make It

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together pumpkin puree, coconut milk, maple syrup, eggs, pumpkin pie spice, lemon zest, vanilla, and salt until smooth and no lumps are visible. Equally pour into ten 4-ounce ramekins and place on a baking sheet.
3. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes.
4. Custards should jiggle slightly in center when removed from oven. Let cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for 1 hour.
5. Serve with whipped cream, if desired.

Baking Vessel

While the recipe calls for individual ramekins, you can also bake the crustless pumpkin pie in a single larger baking dish or even muffin tins for a fun, portable option.

The possibilities for customization are endless, allowing you to create a crustless pumpkin pie that perfectly aligns with your taste preferences and dietary requirements.

Storage and Shelf Life

One of the great advantages of the crustless pumpkin pie is its ability to be made ahead of time, making it an ideal dessert for the busy holiday season. These individual pumpkin custards can be refrigerated for up to 4 days, ensuring you have a delicious and healthy treat on hand whenever the craving strikes.

To store the crustless pumpkin pies, simply place the chilled ramekins in an airtight container and refrigerate. When you're ready to serve, simply top them with a dollop of whipped cream or your preferred topping and enjoy.

Reference: SkinnyTaste

https://greatist.com/move/abs-workout-best-abs-exercises-you-can-do-standing-up#best-standing-ab-exercises

Featured Exercise ► Wide Second Side Crunch

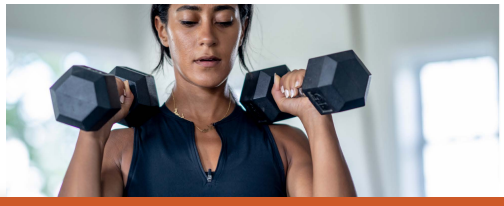
HOW TO DO IT:

- Stand with your feet wider than hip-width apart and hold a dumbbell in each hand. Turn your toes outward and lower into a wide squat (also called a wide second squat if you're a barre lover).
- Raise your arms into a goalpost position (elbows bent to 90 degrees), engage your core, and bend to the right, aiming to tap your elbow to your thigh.
- Do 10 reps to the right and 10 to the left. Alternate sides for 20 reps.
- Pro tip: Make sure to squeeze your glutes and keep your hips in line with your torso. And avoid sticking your butt out.

THE BENEFITS:

The wide second side crunch primarily targets the oblique muscles, specifically the external obliques and the internal obliques. These muscles play a crucial role in stabilizing the spine, facilitating rotation, and assisting with lateral flexion of the torso. By engaging the obliques, this exercise can:

- Improve core strength and stability
- Enhance athletic performance in sports that require explosive twisting movements
- Reduce the risk of lower back pain and injury
- Promote better posture and spinal alignment
- Contribute to a more defined and sculpted midsection



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

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