

# The Medical Journal of Australia • MJA

# MEDIA RELEASE

## **UNDER 2s' SCREEN TIME 100% OVER AUSTRALIAN GUIDELINES**

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AUSTRALIAN children are being allowed to exceed national guidelines for recommended daily screen time with subsequent risk of potential harms, particularly for those under 3 years of age, according to the authors of a research letter published today in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Australian Department of Health guidelines recommend that children under 2 years of age have no screen time, a limit of one hour per day for 2 to 5-year-old children, and a limit of 2 hours of recreational screen time per day for 5 to 17-year-old children.

Researchers from The University of Queensland, led by Principal Research Fellow, Associate Professor Leigh Tooth, from the School of Public Health, analysed data collected in 2015 for 3063 mothers in the 1973–1978 birth cohort of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (age, 37–42 years), and data collected in 2016–17 for their 5780 children in the Mothers and their Children's Health study.

They found that children for children aged 12 months the mean daily screen time was 50 minutes on weekdays and 58 minutes on weekends; by 2 years, it was 91 minutes on weekdays and 105 minutes on weekends.

"Weekday daily screen time plateaued at about 3 years of age, and the mean values between 5 and 12 years of age (range, 74-115 minutes) were below guideline levels, probably because of (pre)school attendance," Tooth and colleagues wrote.

The proportions of children whose daily screen time exceeded the recommended maximum were largest for children aged 1-4 years.

"The rapid uptake of screens by children before their third birthday is of particular concern because greater screen time increases the risk of poorer developmental outcomes," they wrote.

"Excessive screen time on weekends among children of all ages reduces their active play time, with implications for their health.

"The potential harms of screen use for very young children should be investigated, as should strategies for helping parents manage the screen time of their children from early infancy onwards," Tooth and colleagues concluded.

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