

Texas Medical Association's Outreach Campaign Toolkit



TURN IT OFF TODAY

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"One of the factors driving suicides – as well as depression, anxiety, and other psychological problems – is increased use of digital devices by young people."

BACKGROUND

When physicians in a Lubbock emergency department saw an uptick in suicide and suicide attempts – especially among adolescents – it sparked an idea for a new educational campaign. Turn It Off Today alerts Texans to pay attention to how much time they spend on electronic devices.

A review of medical literature shows that one of the factors driving suicides – as well as depression, anxiety, and other psychological problems – is increased use of digital devices by young people.

"More and more research is proving that increased screen time – i.e., time spent on digital media such as smartphones, tablets, computers, TV, and gaming consoles – is associated with poor health outcomes in children, adolescents, and even adults," said Lubbock radiologist Eman Attaya, MD.

Turn It Off Today encourages families to reduce or minimize screen time and increase "green time," or time outdoors, which has been shown to improve attention and memory, self-esteem, and stress hormone levels while reducing anxiety and regulating natural sleep rhythms.

"The goal of the campaign is to help families recognize that there is a direct correlation between excessive screen time and poor emotional and physical well-being, and to understand that electronic devices are addictive," Dr. Attaya said.

Turn It Off Today is especially timely because the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy psychological toll on children and adolescents. Concerns over the pandemic's impact prompted the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association to declare a "national state of emergency" in children's mental health.

Turn It Off Today campaign materials help parents understand how to regulate screen time for their children based on age and suggest ways to direct children toward constructive activities, like playing, exercising, and reading. The campaign also encourages parents and their kids to pledge to stay off their devices for a couple of hours here or there, or even all day, each week.



HOWTO USETHE "TURN IT OFF TODAY" TOOLKIT

- 1. Everything you need to promote the Turn It Off Today campaign in your community is provided in this toolkit. Help us get the word out about TMA's newest outreach campaign through media relations and social media outreach.
- 2. Toolkit materials: pledge card, talking points, social media messages and graphics, news release, and resources
- 3. Media relations: Use the talking points and draft news release to generate interest about the campaign in your community. Send the release to your local media.
- 4. Social media: Fill out the pledge card and take a photo of you and your family taking the Turn It Off Today pledge. Post these on your social media channels with the hashtag #TurnItOffToday.
- 5. Use the Turn It Off Today frame on your Facebook page.
- 6. Download the social media graphics by clicking on the graphic itself, then rightclicking to copy or save to your computer for use in a social media post.
- Post up to three times per week on your social media channels using the
 messages and graphics provided. **Do not modify** the social media graphics. All
 materials are copyrighted.

You can also find these toolkit elements on texmed.org/TurnItOff.

MESSAGES

- Concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic's impact prompted the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association to declare a "national state of emergency" in children's mental health.
- Risks associated with excessive screen time include developmental delays in literacy, speech, and motor skills; mental health issues like depression, anxiety, inability to focus or finish tasks, and even suicide; obesity; sleep problems; and physical health concerns like myopia, neck/back pain, and poor posture.
- While screen time among young people has increased since the pandemic, spending time in nature has decreased. "Green time" is important and improves psychological well-being and mental health in children in many ways. Time in nature restores attention, reduces stress, improves memory, regulates circadian rhythms, improves cortisol levels, improves self-esteem, decreases depression and anxiety, and reduces emotional problems.
- Excessive screen time impacts overall well-being and mental health. Make a pledge to reduce screen time and replace it with "green time." Decreasing the time your family spends on devices will improve everyone's health.
- The Turn It Off Today campaign provides information for parents on how to regulate screen time for their children based on age and suggests ways to direct children toward constructive activities, like playing, exercising, and reading. The campaign encourages parents and their kids to pledge to stay off their devices for a couple of hours, or even all day, each week.
- Get started by checking your digital health. Most phones and tablets have settings that track your app usage. Find out how long your family spends on social media, texting, and playing games.
- Excessive screen time is unhealthy. It can cause serious developmental delays, anxiety, and depression in children and adults. Set new device guidelines for your family.
- Take the pledge and Turn It Off Today. Meet with your family to discuss the risks associated with excessive screen time. Then find ways to replace screen time with in-person activities, reading, and "green time." Fill out the pledge card, take a photo of you and your family with your pledge cards, and post it on your social media channels. Use #TurnItOffToday when posting your photo(s).

PLEDGE CARD

TURN IT OFF TODAY

Excessive screen time is unhealthy

Too much screen time creates serious risks, like developmental delays, anxiety, depression, inability to focus, obesity, sleep problems, and neck/back pain.

	IIDELINES FOR YOUR FAMILY ded by the American Academy of Pediatrics and WHO
Age 2 or younger	Avoid screen time unless video-chatting or watching high-quality programming together for no longer than one hour
2-5 years	Limit to one hour a day for noneducational programming
6-12 years	Place consistent limits on use (no more than two hours a day)
12+ years	Designate media-free times and identify media-free zones

"Green" time improves well-being

Spending time outdoors improves attention and memory, self-esteem, and stress hormone levels. It reduces anxiety and regulates your natural sleep rhythms.

How can parents/caregivers help?

- ✓ Encourage other activities to offset screen time, especially "green" time.
- ✓ Avoid screen time an hour before bedtime, or shut off at a specific time every night.
- ✓ Keep devices out of bedrooms.
- ✓ Co-view with child.
- ✓ Restrict/monitor content.
- ✓ Trade play time for screen time.

Make a family commitment to decrease screen time and increase "green" time together. Sign the pledge on the back of this card to Turn It Off Today.



#turnitofftoday

TURN IT OFF TODAY

PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND ADULTS

Reduce Screen Time

☐ Turn off notifications on my devices
Use the time limit setting on my devices
☐ Employ device options (e.g., flip phone,
limited apps, no notifications)
☐ Monitor app use from my phone
☐ Turn It Off one hour before bedtime
☐ Turn It Off one day a week for eight weeks
☐ Turn It Off 6-8 pm (#) days a week
☐ Other:
Increase Green Time
Increase Green Time □ Take the kids to the park
☐ Take the kids to the park
☐ Take the kids to the park☐ Walk the dog
☐ Take the kids to the park☐ Walk the dog☐ Walk With a Doc texmed.org/wwad
☐ Take the kids to the park ☐ Walk the dog ☐ Walk With a Doc texmed.org/wwad ☐ Water the plants

KIDS

Reduce Screen Time

neduce Screen Time
Turn off notifications on my devices
Use the time limit setting on my devices
Read a book
Play board games
Turn It Off one hour before bedtime
Turn It Off one day a week for eight weeks
Turn It Off 6-8 pm (#) days a week
Other:
Increase Green Time
Increase Green Time Play outside for 30 minutes
Play outside for 30 minutes
Play outside for 30 minutes Ask an adult to take me to the park
Play outside for 30 minutes Ask an adult to take me to the park Walk the dog Water the plants Ride my bike/skateboard (wearing a helmet!)
Play outside for 30 minutes Ask an adult to take me to the park Walk the dog Water the plants Ride my bike/skateboard (wearing a helmet!) texmed.org/hardhats
Play outside for 30 minutes Ask an adult to take me to the park Walk the dog Water the plants Ride my bike/skateboard (wearing a helmet!)

Share your pledge via social media (during designated media time, of course!).

Use hashtag #turnitofftoday.

Signature



SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Join TMA (@texmed) in its new outreach campaign to encourage parents and their children to turn off their devices and instead spend more time outdoors.

- Take the Turn It Off Today pledge. Turning off your phone, iPad, and computer for a couple of hours every day improves overall health and well-being. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Reduce Screen Time. Increase Green Time. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Accept the Turn It Off Today challenge. Pledge to turn off your device 6-8 pm one or more days per week. Fill out the pledge card and post it on your computer, iPad, refrigerator, etc., as a reminder. Share your photo + pledge here. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- "Green time" improves well-being. Spending time outdoors improves attention and memory, self-esteem, and stress hormone levels. It reduces anxiety and regulates your natural sleep rhythms. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Family time isn't sitting around looking at your device. Replace your screen time with "green time" and get outside with friends and family. Studies show green time boosts happiness and personal relationships. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- In the time it takes to scroll through 30-60 minutes of social media feeds, you are missing out on time with family and friends.
 Spend time making memories with friends and family – your phone will always be there.
 #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Take a walk outside. A breath of fresh air calms the mind and keeps you healthy.
 Your body and brain will thank you.
 #TurnItOffToday #TMA

HASHTAGS

#TurnItOffToday #TurnItOff #TMA #MoreGreenTime

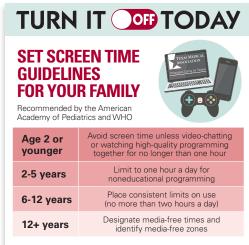
- Staying away from your devices before bed improves your mood, memory, and physical health. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- It's easy to kick back and scroll through social media when you need a break, but it isn't always relaxing. Instead read a good book that can transport you to a new world, help you sleep better at night, and boost your intelligence. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- It's important to take care of your mental health and well-being. Getting off your devices is a step in the right direction. Texas physicians say overuse of electronic devices and social media worsens mental health. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Social media can connect you with your peers, but overuse can lead to isolation and increased depression and anxiety. Put your phone, iPad, computer down for a day or even a couple of hours and reconnect with a friend in person. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Give yourself a break and move around for 30 minutes in your home, at the gym, or outside. Endorphins from exercise uplift you in ways short bursts of dopamine from screen time never will. #TurnItOffToday #TMA
- Spending time with your family or friends away from electronic devices is a great way to keep your mind healthy. Build close connections by sitting down for a board game night! #TurnItOffToday

SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS (1200X1200)

(Stand-alone)













POST Turn It Off Today. Reduce screen time and increase green time. Fill out your **CAPTION:** pledge card, take a photo, and share it on social media. **#TurnItOffToday**.

SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS (1200X1200)

Carousel graphics





POST Take the Turn It Off Today challenge. Take a pledge today to **CAPTION:** stay off your device two hours per day. **#TurnItOffToday**.







TURN IT OF TODAY



Age 2 or younger Avoid screen time unless videochatting or watching high-quality programming together for no longer than one hour

TURN IT OFF TODAY



Ages 2-5 Years Limit to one hour a day for noneducational programming

TURN IT OFF TODAY



Ages 6-12 Years

Place consistent limits on use (no more than two hours a day)

TURN IT OF TODAY



Ages 12+ Years

Designate media-free times and identify media-free zones

POST #TurnItOffToday. Set screen time guidelines for yourself and your CAPTION: family. Swipe to see the recommendations for all age groups.

SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS (1200X1200)

Carousel graphics



POST Turn It Off Today. Reduce screen time and increase green time. Fill out your **CAPTION:** pledge card, take a photo, and share it on social media. **#TurnItOffToday**.



"Turn It Off" to Help Mental Health, Doctors Suggest

Physicians Caring for Texans

New TMA push suggests kids, parents pause electronic devices

Devices like the one you may be using to read this news release might be harming your health, Texas physicians say, so they have a suggestion: Turn it off.

Physicians are concerned about more people suffering mental and behavioral health problems, especially as the pandemic lags on. Doctors see connections between people's suffering and overuse of electronic devices, especially among young people who seem addicted to their phones and other screens.

To combat these issues, the <u>Texas Medical Association</u> (TMA) is launching a new initiative, <u>Turn It Off Today</u>, to encourage families to pledge to take a break from electronic devices.

"The goal of <u>Turn It Off Today</u> is to help families recognize there is a direct correlation between excessive screen time and poor emotional and physical well-being, and to understand electronic devices are addictive," said Eman Attaya, MD, immediate past chair of the TMA Council on Health Promotion, which recently launched the initiative statewide. Dr. Attaya and her fellow physicians and alliance members at the Lubbock County Medical Society and the Lubbock County Medical Society Alliance created and piloted Turn It Off Today in 2019 for area families to adopt; TMA's program replicates that.

The program aims to reduce the amount of time people – especially children and adolescents – spend staring at their screens and to replace those habits with healthy activities like physical activity, social interaction, reading, and "green time" (time outdoors).

Children and adolescents spend at least four hours daily on leisure-based screen time (and up to nine hours total screen time per day). The more time people, especially adolescents, spend looking at social media and other activities on their screens, the greater their rates of depression and anxiety, according to multiple studies. Too much screen time also brings developmental delays, sleep deprivation, thoughts of suicide, lack of focus, and obesity. Staring at screens more than an hour each day also is tied to less curiosity, lower self-control, less emotional stability, and greater inability to complete tasks.

To physicians like Dr. Attaya, simply turning devices off is the best solution.

"Mental health issues are predicted to be among the leading causes of illness and death in adolescents, so they are something we should all be seriously concerned about," Dr. Attaya said. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other pediatric physician specialists recently declared a "national state of emergency" for child and adolescent mental health.

"Yes, the pandemic worsened the crisis; however, there have actually been increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide in youth before the pandemic – over the last 10 years – with suicide now the second leading cause of death among people age 10 to 24," Dr. Attaya said.

Turn It Off Today features a pact for family members to sign, pledging to limit screen time several ways, for example by switching off phones, computers, tablets, or other devices one hour before bedtime; one day per week for eight weeks; or daily from 6 to 8 pm. Another pledge calls for simply disengaging phone alerts, which draw people's attention to the device. Screen time refers to using any digital media such as smartphones, computers, tablets, gaming consoles, or television.

Replacing that with more "green time" improves psychological well-being and mental health, and leads to less depression, anxiety, and emotional problems.

"Once families are aware of the negative impact excessive screen time has, they can make appropriate and wise choices about how to limit the use of electronic devices," said Dr. Attaya. "Taking a break from technology will improve our overall well-being."

TMA is the largest state medical society in the nation, representing more than 55,000 physician and medical student members. It is located in Austin and has 110 component county medical societies around the state. TMA's key objective since 1853 is to improve the health of all Texans.

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Take a Break From Electronic Devices During Holidays, Physicians Suggest

Physicians Caring for Texans

New TMA push helps kids, parents reduce screen time

As families spend time with loved ones this holiday season, physicians say immersing oneself in electronic devices like phones and laptops can stand in the way of creating bonds and feeling connected. To combat this, Texas doctors recommend everyone "turn it off."

"Families are physically gathering together, but each member is personally engaged and distracted with their electronic devices, and not interacting with each other," said Eman Attaya, MD, immediate past chair of the <u>Texas Medical Association</u> (TMA) Council on Health Promotion.

The problem, she said, is these devices promote loneliness and isolation, while hindering meaningful social interactions.

To help people unplug and connect, TMA launched a new initiative, <u>Turn It Off Today</u>, to encourage families to pledge to take a break from electronic devices. The program aims to reduce the amount of time people – especially children and adolescents – spend looking at their screens.

"We must remember that face-to-face interactions (offline interactions) and strong social ties are associated with greater life satisfaction and overall well-being than online interactions," said Dr. Attaya, whose council launched the initiative statewide. Dr. Attaya and her fellow physicians and alliance members at the Lubbock County Medical Society and the Lubbock County Medical Society Alliance created Turn It Off Today in 2019 for area families to adopt; TMA's program replicates that.

The program's goal is to encourage families to swap time spent watching movies, playing video games, or scrolling through social media with "green time" (time outdoors). Dr. Attaya recommends families instead try walking, hiking, biking, and other sports during the holidays, adding "studies have shown that being outside promotes physical activity, attention restoration, stress reduction, improved memory and sleep, and even healthier cortisol levels."

Other activities to consider include playing board games, doing arts and crafts, creating an indoor garden, cooking/baking together, playing music, reading, or learning a new hobby.

<u>Turn It Off Today</u> features a pact for family members to sign, pledging several ways to limit screen time. One example is switching off phones, computers, tablets, or other devices a few hours every day. Another pledge calls for simply disengaging phone alerts, which draw people's attention to the device. Setting time limits on apps and removing electronic devices from the bedroom will also help reduce screen time.

Dependance on electronic devices has been increasing over the years, but the pandemic has made them an integral part of people's daily lives. Children and adolescents spend at least four hours daily on leisure-based screen time (and up to nine hours total screen time per day).

Too much screen time can lead to depression and anxiety, developmental delays, sleep deprivation, thoughts of suicide, lack of focus, and obesity. Staring at screens more than an hour each day also is tied to less curiosity, lower self-control, less emotional stability, and less ability to complete tasks. People can even experience physical changes in the brain such as "grey matter volume loss."

The program recognizes that abandoning technology entirely is not practical. It aims to educate families on the detrimental side effects of too much screen time while developing a plan to help limit use.

"Taking a break from technology, participating in nonscreen activities, and socially engaging face to face will improve our overall emotional and physical well-being," said Dr. Attaya. She hopes families will pledge to turn it off and spend quality time together instead.

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TEXAS MEDICINE TODAY ARTICLE

Help Families Manage Screen Time – and Mental Health – With TMA's "Turn It Off Today" Campaign

By Sean Price

When a disturbing mental health trend emerged in the Lubbock emergency department where Eman Attaya, MD, works, it sparked the Texas Medical Association's newest educational program to help families better control how much their kids interact with electronic devices: Turn It Off Today.

"When I was covering the [emergency room] as a radiologist in 2018, I had been in practice for about seven years, and I had never seen such an uptick in suicide and suicidal attempts in young adults," she said.

A review of medical literature showed that one of the factors <u>driving suicides</u> – as well as depression, anxiety, and other psychological problems – is increased use of digital devices by young people.

"More and more research is proving that increased screen time – i.e., time spent on digital media such as smartphones, tablets, computers, TV, and gaming consoles – is associated with poor health outcomes in children, adolescents, and even adults," Dr. Attaya said.

In March 2020, Dr. Attaya launched Turn It Off Today locally with the help of the Lubbock County Medical Society Alliance and the medical society. The TMA Council on Health Promotion approved it in May 2021 for use in a statewide campaign.

Turn It Off Today encourages families to minimize screen time in favor of <u>"green time"</u> – or time outdoors – which has been shown to improve attention and memory, self-esteem, and stress hormone levels while reducing anxiety and regulating natural sleep rhythms.

"The goal of Turn It Off Today is to help families recognize that there is a direct correlation between excessive screen time and poor emotional and physical well-being, and to understand that electronic devices are addictive," Dr. Attaya said.

Turn It Off Today is especially timely because COVID-19 has taken a heavy psychological toll on children and adolescents. Concerns over the pandemic's impact recently prompted the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association to declare a "national state of emergency" in children's mental health.

TMA's Turn It Off Today materials help parents understand how to regulate screen time for their children based on age and offer suggestions for ways to direct children toward constructive activities, like playing, exercising, and reading.

For families, the most important step is to keep children from becoming dependent on electronic devices, Dr. Attaya says. For instance, parents are encouraged to use time-limit settings on devices, monitor app use, and turn off all devices an hour before bedtime.

One damaging aspect of electronic devices is their <u>ability to interrupt sleep</u> if children are given access to them after bedtime, Dr. Attaya says.

"The kids are staying up at night," she said. "That time they could have been sleeping is displaced by the screen time, and so they wake up feeling groggy and unrefreshed."

Parents also are encouraged to avoid giving young children some of the most sophisticated devices, such as smartphones, because they are not yet mature enough to put those devices down on their own, Dr. Attaya says, adding that electronic devices contribute to developmental delays in young children.

"Families should also realize that the earlier teens use digital media, specifically social media, the greater the impact on their mental health," Dr. Attaya said. "Once families are aware of the negative impact excessive screen time has, they can make appropriate and wise choices about how to limit the use of electronic devices."

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Available to order through interlibrary loan from the TMA Knowledge Center. Cost \$15. To request, email knowledge@texmed.org.

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