

Parent Health Bulletin



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: USING COMPUTERS SAFELY



Does your child spend a lot of time in front of the computer screen? Depending on your child, the computer may be used for schoolwork or for fun. No matter what the computer is used for, it is important to make sure that certain safety precautions are taken for children's bodies in front of the screen.

Did you also know that there are proper ways to sit and type? Or that the computer screen should be a certain distance from your eyes? Read on to learn more about how you can protect your child from having pain when he or she is at the computer for a long period of time. Kids can get repetitive stress injuries, just as adults do when they sit at computers for long periods of time.

Sitting properly at the computer

Your child should be sitting in the chair so that his or her entire bottom is on the chair. You want the legs to be bending at the knees and the feet to be on a flat

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surface. You may have to put a stool or pile of books under a child's feet so that the feet are resting flat.

Proper placement for typing

You want to make sure that your child's elbows are bent and that his or her wrists are straight. If the keyboard is too far away, see if you can bring it closer. Also, you want to make sure that the wrists are not flexing up or down. You may need to adjust the keyboard accordingly so that your child's wrists are not going to hurt. If your child complains of their wrists hurting, they may be getting an overuse injury.

Distance from the screen

Our eyes can be bothered if they are too close to the computer screen. A good measurement is to make sure the screen is at least 18-20 inches away from your child's face. If your child complains that he or she cannot see the screen well at this distance, you may want to see an eye doctor and have his or her eyes checked.

Level of the screen

It is also important that the level of the screen be adjusted as needed for your child. If your child has to constantly look up at the screen or down at the keyboard, he or she may injure the neck muscles. The screen should be positioned so that if your child looks directly forward, the screen is about level with the forehead. Look to see if your child needs to be adjusted to the screen. If so, adjust the chair or the screen accordingly.

Taking a break

It is easy to lose track of time when one is working on the computer, but it is important that your child takes a break from the computer screen. It is recommended that for every 30 minutes of computer time, there should be a few minutes break. It may be just enough time to go to the bathroom or



For every 30 minutes of computer time, your child should take a short break.

walk through the kitchen to get something to eat, but that's okay. You just want to make sure your child is not spending too much time in front of the screen without taking break.

Computers and screen are becoming more and more common. It is important to teach your child good habits for working in front of the computer screen.

SOURCE:

Nemours KidsHealth. (2011). Computers can be a real pain. Accessed from: <http://kidshealth.org>

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