

Making the most of your child's laptop

You may have lots of questions about how to use your child's laptop and how to be cyber safe, but have you asked how to use their technology to promote good physical health?

Information and Communication Technologies can include laptops, computers, tablets, smart boards, TV's, gaming consoles, and phones. What will be next?

They can be found in all environments including schools, homes and workplaces. There is limited chance to avoid interacting with these technologies. Children have had technology and devices around them from such an early age, so it is important to teach them good practices for life long healthy use of all Information and Communication Technologies.

Some key tips to healthy ICT use for children:

Break up laptop use with *physical activities*

- Do you know the Department Of Health (Australian Government) recommend **60 minutes of daily physical activity and no more than 2 hours screen time** for children aged between 5 and 12 years?
- Limit sedentary behaviour at school and home. Think about how much screen time the children get at home and school, whether it be a smart board, a tablet, a phone, TV. Now there is a laptop to add to the mix. Decreasing the unnecessary screen time is a key to remaining more physically active
- Take a break from computer use with an active task every 30 to 60 minutes.

Encourage *changes in posture*

- It is ok for kids to use a laptop whilst standing at a bench, sitting down or laying on the floor. Variations in body position stimulate muscles, and also assist them to concentrate
- Fidgeting and moving whilst using a laptop is ok. It stops the body from being static and not moving.

When sitting at a desk to use a laptop, ensure *good postures*

- Feet should be touching the floor (if chair is too high get a footstool)
- It isn't essential to have a backrest
- Avoid armrests on chairs
- Desk height should be at around elbow height.

When sitting at a desk to use a laptop, ensure *good eye contact*

- The top of the screen should be at eye height. A separate keyboard might be helpful at home.
- Position screen one arm lengths away and directly in front of the child
- Avoid glare from windows



Develop typing skills

- Learn shortcuts on the keyboard
- Learn how to touch type




Transporting the laptop

- Choose a low weight option where available
- Carry laptop in back pack using straps over both shoulders

Pain

- Teach your child to recognise when they feel discomfort or pain they should do something about it, like take a break and stretch rather than working through it

Other simple ideas to ensure healthy computer use include:

SCREEN FREE	PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	PAIN ZONE
Make bedrooms a screen free zone – this will enhance cyber safety but also limit the amount of time they are likely to spend on it.	Encourage a minimum amount of physical activity prior to screen use – if you like technology consider using a fit bit, where they have to reach a certain amount of activity before they access their “screen”.	Use timing devices and set alarms to remind you to get up and move around rather than relying on pain or discomfort telling you to move.
		

Reference:

Straker, L, Johnson, P, Burgess-Limerick, R, Dennerlein, J (2010) *Evidence Based Guidelines for the wise use of computers by children: Physical Development Guidelines*. ERGONOMICS Vol 53. No 4

Department of Health, (2014) *Physical Activity Guidelines for children aged 5-12 years*. AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/F01F92328EDADA5BCA257BF0001E720D/\\$File/brochure%20PA%20Guidelines_A5_5-12yrs.PDF](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/F01F92328EDADA5BCA257BF0001E720D/$File/brochure%20PA%20Guidelines_A5_5-12yrs.PDF)