**NEWS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR BABY FROM BIRTH TO AGE 3:**

**Screen time can seriously interfere with your baby’s development**

Like you, all parents hope their children will grow and thrive to their best potential.

The first three years are vital for your baby’s brain, which is developing more rapidly than at any other time in life. For their brains to develop in a healthy way, babies need to use all their senses to explore their world and have caring relationships with you and other caregivers. How the brain develops in the first years sets the foundation for your child’s overall health and wellbeing.

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships are crucial for babies, who need supportive "serve-and-return" interactions with you and other caregivers. It’s like playing ball. The baby "serves" through coos, cries, smiles, and facial expressions. You "return the serve" with soothing words, smiles, and gentle touch. Seeing your face and hearing your voice helps your baby feel safe and secure.

Being a parent is joyful and fulfilling, but can feel overwhelming, too. Sometimes we turn to screen viewing as a way to take a break. We may provide our children with screens thinking it might encourage learning, or simply to calm or entertain them. **But new research shows that frequent and prolonged screen viewing by babies and toddlers can have the exact opposite effect. It can disrupt their emotional, physical, and brain development.** Screen device use by babies, toddlers, and their caregivers—whether TV, phone, laptop, or tablet—can interfere with relationship-building, which is so important.

Research also shows that children birth to age 3 who have regular and prolonged exposure to screens may have:

♦Trouble learning words and how to speak

♦Differences with how their brains form and operate

 *“The screens almost made it feel like, instead of living and enjoying the day, it felt like I was just getting through the day.*

 *I feel so empowered now that I’ve done it— [parenting] without screens—and I know I can do it. I feel like endless possibilities. With screens not being an option, it really frees you from that crutch.”*

-from a mother who weaned her 18-month-old from screen dependency by stopping the child’s screen exposure and greatly increasing his social interaction

♦Problems with caregiver relationships and in other social settings

♦Tantrums, hyperactivity, and other difficulties managing emotions

♦Over- or under-sensitivity to sound, light, and other aspects of their environment

♦Poor coordination and difficulty with fine motor tasks

♦Higher likelihood of autism symptoms or diagnosis by age 3

♦Trouble falling asleep and staying asleep

**DID YOU KNOW?**

>Babies naturally learn very well from you and other people and not from screens.

>Programs made for little ones often use tricks designed to keep babies viewing and can be habit-forming.

>TV left on in the background distracts babies from their play and from you and they will converse and interact less.

>Infants can feel upset and confused when your face is blocked by a phone.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

♥ Talk, talk, talk to your baby. Describe what you do together. They may not use words to talk back yet, but they are learning from you.
♥ Put your phone away when you are together—including during play, feeding, diapering, and transport—so you see and hear each other. ♥ Provide playtime indoors and outdoors, where they can use all their senses and build strength, creativity, and imagination.

♥ Give them non-electronic things to play with such as containers and lids, pots and spoons, balls, and blocks. They can also use their imagination playing with dolls, fabric pieces, empty boxes, water, sand, mud, and modeling clay.

♥ Read books together every day, which builds brain power and prepares your child to be a good student.

♥ Avoid using a screen to quiet an upset child, which can make it harder for them to learn to manage their emotions over time.

♥ Make a list of screen-free activities to choose from when you have the urge to turn to screens.

♥ Have times and places in your home that are screen-free, such as at mealtimes and in bedrooms.

♥ Choose screen-free daycare and nurseries.

**Minimum guidelines for screen management in early life:**

**Under 2 years:** Avoid screen viewing by baby or by caregivers when with baby, except for brief caregiver-attended video chats. Keep TV off when baby is present.

**Ages 2-5:** Limit child’s screen viewing to no more than 1 hour in total per day. Watching together with child is preferable to child viewing screen alone.

♥ Tell your partner, babysitter, relatives, and daycare how your baby’s brain is being built through talking, playing, singing and reading—and by keeping screens off.

♥ You are a role model. Be mindful of your own screen use.

♥ Get help if you feel depressed, anxious, or overwhelmed.

*Prepared by GAINING—The Global Alliance for Inspiring Non-Tech Infant Nurturing and Growth.*

***See more at MyBabyGains.org***