

# Health Alliance Issues Global Alert - Screen Viewing at an Early Age Can Disrupt the Development of Babies and Toddlers

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HANOVER, MA, UNITED STATES, April 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A worldwide group of developmental researchers and child health specialists is simultaneously sounding the alarm that excessive screen use by and around children between birth and age 3 is a “serious risk factor” for the most sensitive and rapidly growing period of human brain development.

The alliance cites research emerging globally over the past six years associating screen exposure with disruptions to babies’ cognitive, physical and social-emotional development. Developmental concerns include speech delay, attachment problems, behavioral changes including autistic-like symptoms, and differences in how infant brains form and operate.

The worldwide alert happens April 23, on World Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day.

This news is emerging at a time when the U.S. government is looking for environmental risk factors for Autism Spectrum Disorder. Research cited by the alliance points to evidence that screen time may be a factor.

New CDC data show autism occurs among 1 in 31 children in the U.S., up from 1 in 150 in the year 2000. For the first time, autism is most prevalent in historically underserved populations, who are also at greater risk of exceeding screen time recommendations.

GAINING cites a growing body of research which associates greater screen exposure in the first year of life to ASD-like symptoms and greater likelihood of receiving an ASD diagnosis by age 3.

Difficulties for infants and babies posed by screen use can occur through multiple pathways, including through the direct effects of sensory hyper-stimulation on the developing brain.

Time spent viewing screens displaces the critical social and real-world sensory experiences that very young children need for optimal growth and development.

“The research tells us that screens distract babies from paying attention to people, distract the parents and caregivers from paying attention to the babies, and may directly affect early brain connectivity and attention mechanisms,” according to Karen Heffler, M.D., researcher in the

Department of Psychiatry at Drexel University College of Medicine. “Parents, healthcare providers and governments need to know about findings from this research in order to make the best choices for babies’ well-being.”

Members of the group known as the Global Alliance for Inspiring Non-tech Infant Nurturing and Growth (GAINING) also stress how to support baby brain-building and development: through full-sensory physical play and responsive “serve and return” engagement which parents and other caregivers are naturally equipped to do. Similar to playing ball, babies learn how to speak and interact through “serving” a sound or expression to caregivers who “return the serve” with soothing words, smiles, and gentle touch.

Based on guidelines recently updated in several countries around the world, GAINING Awareness Alerts recommend that until at least age 2, babies should not be exposed to screens except in supervised video chats with loved ones. Three out of four children under age 2 now exceed those recommendations, but studies also show parents who learn the guidelines allow significantly less screen time.

GAINING highlights the economic advantages of preventing the negative effects of excessive screen time in early childhood. By addressing these issues early on, governments can reduce the need for expensive speech, behavioral, and other therapeutic interventions for screen-related delays among toddlers and preschoolers.

The “News to Know” alert inspires parents to be confident that they are equipped to provide exactly what babies need: one-to-one attention, words, gentle touch, reading time, and playtime indoors and out with non-electronic playthings. GAINING Awareness Alerts will be distributed by members around the world on April 23, on World Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day.

Find the Alerts, supporting research, and parent resources for managing screen time on the project website: [MyBabyGains.org](http://MyBabyGains.org).

About GAINING:

The Global Alliance for Inspiring Non-tech Infant Nurturing and Growth (GAINING) consists of child development specialists, clinicians, researchers, educators, and advocates on a mission to raise worldwide awareness of babies’ crucial need for physical play and face-to-face human interaction and of the risks to their cognitive, emotional, and relational development associated with regular and prolonged screen exposure. GAINING Awareness Alerts are based on global research findings and are for the information of parents, caregivers, healthcare providers, and government agencies.

#TechCanWait #WICAMHD #ProtectBabyBrains  
#ScreenFreeBabies #ScreenFreeToddlers

#ParentsNotScreens #YouTimeNotScreenTime  
#WeAreGAINING

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