# **E-smog and excess screen time: New age parents, take notice**

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It’s a beautiful and an overwhelming shift in the pattern of parenting and upbringing, from the previous generation to this one. The Gen X is now parenting the Gen Z (well most of them). Parenting is a responsibility and an opportunity as it has an immense influence on how the future generations view life, health, work, spending and education.

Our values and thought processes on important life decisions and habits are often shaped by our parents. So while we are aware that today’s parenting is so much different from how our parents raised us in 70’s and 80’s, the new age parents must catch up with the pace of this heavily technology driven world.

Technology is amazing, it connects us to others, is convenient and makes our lives easier by providing accessibility. But as the old adage goes, too much of anything can be bad. The sad reality is that constant exposure to multiple sources of tech 24×7 is taking a toll on our and our children’s health and impacting their mental and physical wellbeing. From the time our children are born to the time they turn into young adults, they are subjected to electromagnetic radiation from multiple devices like your very own mobile phone, laptops, Wi-Fi routers, tablets, those mobile towers which you have no control over….the list is long!

That moment when you hand over the phone or that tab to your child while you feed her, we want you to know that not only is she oblivious to the taste or the nutritional value of the food going inside her — she is also getting impacted by the e-radiations in that moment. The educational videos that they watch may also be impacting their developmental growth and behavioural patterns. It’s not the first time that you are reading about the health hazards of electromagnetic radiations on children. But it sure should be a good time to get serious about adapting a lifestyle which keeps your child away from the harmful effects of e-pollution. After all in 2011, WHO (World Health Organisation) has termed it as a possible carcinogen of level 2B, the same category which contains exhaust fumes, lead, asbestos and other deadly substances! As Andrew Weil, MD, physician says, “Electromagnetic pollution may be the most significant form of pollution human activity has produced this century, all the more dangerous because it’s invisible and insensible.”

What makes it more concerning is that children are more susceptible to exposure to EMR as they have thinner skulls and their brains contain more absorptive fluid. Research, notably by Dr Om Gandhi, shows that children’s developing brains, eyes and bone marrow absorb electromagnetic radiation three to 10 times deeper than adults.

Another 2010 study by researchers at UCLA spanning 29,000 children found that by age seven, there was a 50 per cent increase in behavioural problems for children that had “regular exposure” to mobile phones in the womb and during early childhood. The behavioural problems included hyperactivity, attention disorders, and social issues. Similar findings came out of an early study of 13,000 Danish children. Research also shows a correlation between the radiofrequency electromagnetic field (RF-EMF) exposure and sleep quality. Exposure to EMR decreases deep sleep, REM sleep (REM stands for rapid eye movement), affects brain activity during the sleep, alters circadian rhythms and results in sleep related cognitive changes. Most of these studies have been conducted in controlled laboratories, so it is difficult to say how this manifests in the population at large as the effects may take decades to express themselves.Additionally, the exposure to electro smog today is far greater than what was 15 years ago.

Therefore, there is a need to use technology responsibly.

**Small lifestyle changes do make a difference.**

1. Remember that cell phones are not toys or teething items. Download the YouTube videos your children need to watch and put the device on airplane mode before handing them over to avoid unnecessary exposure.
2. Switch off the Wi-Fi when not in use.
3. Keep devices away from the bedroom. Do not use them as alarm clocks.
4. Put your laptops on desks, not laps.
5. Hardwire all devices that connect to the internet like the laptops and the printers.
6. Avoid making calls in the lifts or while commuting. The cell phone works harder to get a signal through the metal increasing the exposure level.
7. Use protective technology for the devices you have control over – like the radiation protection chip for the back of your phone or for your laptop, Enviro-globe for the mobile towers in the vicinity as it protects you from harmful radiations emanating from devices you have no control over.