



**BabyRead Columns
In
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**2018
(July to December)**

**2018 Journal Column
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Babies' health and cellphones

BabyRead's policy is to not allow cellphones to be visible during our reading sessions. Cellphones are harmful to little children.

"Children are not just little adults; their growing minds and bodies make them uniquely vulnerable to the effects of the environment around them, including cellphone radiation." (Web MD)



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While more research is needed, the American Academy of Pediatrics "reminds parents that cellphones are not toys and are not recommended for infants and toddlers." A study published by the Journal of Microscopy and Ultrastructure concluded:

"The rate of microwave radiation absorption is higher in children than adults because their brain tissue is more absorbent, their skulls

are thinner and their relative size is smaller. Fetuses are particularly vulnerable. It is not just brain tissue of the child that is absorbing microwave radiation, but also the child's bone marrow." (Web MD)

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests the following cellphone safety tips for families:

- Do not let a child under 2 years of age play with or be near a cellphone.
- Have periods of your family's day with no electronic devices, including cellphones: e.g. meal time, story time and bath time before the baby goes to bed.
- Your baby/toddler models the adults around her/him. If adults use cellphones often, that's what your child thinks is good and wants to do. Is this what you want to teach your child?

- When talking on a cellphone, hold it at least 1 inch away from your head.

- Use text messaging when possible, and use cellphones in speaker mode or with the use of hand-free kits.

- Avoid carrying your cellphone against your body like in a pocket, sock or bra. Cellphone manufacturers can't guarantee that the amount of radiation you're absorbing will be at a safe level.

- Keep an eye on your signal strength (i.e. how many bars you have). The weaker your cell signal, the harder your phone has to work and the more radiation it gives off.

- Avoid making calls in cars, elevators, trains and buses. The cellphone works harder to get a signal through metal, so the power level increases. (healthychildren.org)

You may ask: Are there any regulations in place to limit cellphone radiation in the United States? There are, but they are based on adults, not children. "Belgium, France, India and other technologically sophisticated governments are passing laws and/or issuing warnings about children's use of wireless devices." (Web MD)

Researchers from Temple University found that children are less likely to learn a new word when a phone call interrupts the child's conversation with their parent. (BabyTalk, 2.2018)

BABYREAD'S GOAL is for moms/caregivers to read daily to their children from birth to 2 years when the brain grows the most. We read (free) twice a month in public libraries and schools. To help, contact director, Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net or (864) 944-7881 or go to our website: www.babyread.org.

Babies, toddlers and technology

Anyone with a young child today has likely worried about screen time and wondered about the impact of devices — TV, cellphones, iPads, Playstations, Wiis— on our kids. Does this technology affect their brains? Does it harm them emotionally and socially?

YES. “Young children learn language best through interaction and engagement with other people, particularly their moms and other relatives. The more these children are involved in watching TV, or playing with an iPad, a cellphone or another electronic device, the less time they have to talk with an adult or play a non-electronic game with themselves or with a friend.



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“The first two years of life are critical — this is when the brain is growing the most, more than it will grow in the next 20 years. Delays here will be associated with later difficulties in learning to read and write in school.”

A study presented in 2017 at the Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting reported that every 30-percent increase in the use of daily screen time was linked to a 49-percent increased risk in “expressive speech delay,” that is, in the use of sounds and words.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screens at all, other than video-chatting with family, for children younger than 18 months.

“The noise and activity of a screen can be distracting for a small child and can cause a disconnect between them and their parents.” (Quotes taken from cnn.com/2017.05/04/health/babies/.)

For kids between 18 and 24 months, they recommend parents choose high-quality programming. They reported that nearly 40 percent of children under age 2 used a mobile device in 2017 — an increase from 10 percent in 2011. These children are, of course, using their parents’ electronic devices.

Parents need to think about how often they let their toddlers use their cellphones. Cellphones are not toys. Babies watch and model adults using cellphones. How often does your baby sit near a TV? When I was young, I was allowed one hour of TV per week, and my parents picked the hour. Instead, I played with other children, by myself or with family, read books and did my homework.

The best advice for parents is to engage with your child(ren). The best way to teach them language is to talk with them, read to them, play with them, use different vocabulary, point out things, tell them stories and have them tell you stories. Being a parent takes lots of time. Babies and toddlers don’t need expensive toys to learn or be happy. They need the love and attention of caring adults.

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More on babies, toddlers and technology

What scientists know is that a baby's brain grows dramatically.

At birth, each baby's brain cell has about 2,500 connections to other brain cells. By age 3, the typical brain cell has 15,000 connections because of the baby's astonishing ability to learn.

The American Academy of Pediatrics argues that there's no reason to take chances with that development.



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For Dr. Jenny Radesky of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the rule was "no media on weekdays. They unplug at family dinner and before bed. For school-age children, they have a family movie night on Fridays ... an example of the principle ... of sharing screen time as a family."

Lauren Hale, a sleep researcher at Stony Brook University in New York, sums up her findings from over a decade of research: "As kids and adults watch or use screens, with light shining in their eyes and close to their face, bedtime gets delayed. It takes longer to fall asleep, sleep quality is reduced and total sleep time is decreased. Her rules: No screens in the bedroom and no screens as part of the bedtime routine. Her 4-year-old told his grandmother: 'You don't want to look at a screen before bed because it tells your brain to stay awake.'" (Quotes, NPR, July 2018)

A few weeks ago, my husband and I went out to dinner. Seated a few tables away was a mom, dad and two children, about 5 and 7 years old. The dad was glued to his computer, the mom was talking on her cellphone and each child was mesmerized by a Game Boy. No one talked to each other for the 20 minutes they waited for their food to arrive. A huge opportunity for family conversation and togetherness was lost. The adults need to set a rule of no electronics during mealtimes.

"Young children mimic what you do. If you are tied to your devices — checking email during diaper changes, texting during playtime, listening on the phone while you "read" to your baby — your behavior will imprint on your child. More importantly, you are distracted from paying attention to your baby. Your baby learns it is fun to talk on a cellphone." (2018 Washington Parent)

Reading, talking and hugging your child is what is needed.

In addition, "The visual stimuli of many apps give children a regular squirt of dopamine, a brain chemical that creates sensations of pleasure. Too much of this can create cravings hard to resist." (2018 Washington Parent)

Babies, toddlers and older children learn to crave electronic devices.

Pre-schoolers need the loving attention of their families. Why risk your baby's healthy development by letting him/her play with electronic devices?

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Nicole, Isabella and Ryker

S.O.S.: BabyRead needs readers.

We are an all-volunteer organization that reads with moms/caregivers and their children from birth to 2 years, when the brain grows the most. We read to families who don't have many books in their homes. We read twice a month in free one-hour sessions in town and at school libraries.



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Meet one of our families:

Jordan, 7, is mom's little helper, while Isabella and Ryker are BabyRead "clients." Isabella, or Bella as her family calls her, is a very busy 2 year old who finds it hard to sit still but truly loves her

books. Martha has been reading with this family for about a year, so Ryker, almost 8 months old, has been read to since birth. You can't imagine any two children more different than Bella and Ryker. Ryker's attention is glued to the books, while Bella is a multi-tasking child, often dashing to and fro while being read to.

Nicole and her husband, Quinnon, first heard about BabyRead while attending a K4 screening for their second-oldest son, Camson, who is now 5. Generally, BabyRead has a table with a poster and children's books at this event, where volunteers introduce BabyRead to families as they come to have their children screened for K4.

Nicole immediately knew she wanted Bella and the new baby to be part of our program. She had already begun reading to Bella, prompted by Jordan's love of reading. She had not read to her older children, Jordan, Camson and Zion, age 9. Nicole now realizes it would have been better if she had read to them all from birth.

BabyRead has made a huge impact on this entire family — they have become a family of readers. Reading is part of every night's bedtime routine. Jordan is an avid reader. She can often be found reading to Bella, who brings her one of her very own books, gifts from BabyRead, with the demand, "Read, read!" Bella also "reads" to Ryker and to herself. Even Mom and Dad have gotten into the act. Nicole says they now carve out time for themselves to read, even though they both work full time. Nicole is manager of a UPS store, and her husband is a special ed aid and assistant football coach.

When I asked Nicole if she thinks her children enjoy BabyRead, she answered with an emphatic, "Yes!" She says when Bella knows they are going to the library to meet with Martha she gets so excited she starts jumping up and down. Nicole says she, too, looks forward to the twice-monthly reading sessions at the Seneca library.

Bella is very proud of the books BabyRead gives her. They love building a library of books at home with the gifts from BabyRead. Bella always wants her new book read to her that night, and she takes it to her crib with her and "reads" it.

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Reading is a hug

What is literacy? Simply, it is our ability to read and write and learn.

Many people believe that children learn to read and write in kindergarten or first grade. However, the foundation for literacy skills is laid starting at birth.

There are many things a parent or caregiver can do to help a child's brain and language development skills develop. We have talked about many of these in past columns: reading to a child, singing



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nursery rhymes and songs, the engagement of “serve and return.”

“No one expects an infant to read, but simply having a book in her hands can start the process of getting familiar with books and reading materials.” *

An important and normal part of developing early literacy skills for babies and toddlers is repetition. They want to hear the same story

again and again.

“But this activity is actually ‘hard-wiring’ their brains and providing consistent stimulation for language development, the cornerstone of literacy.”

To actually change the “hard-wiring” in a child's brain is a big deal. The parent or caregiver's reading — using language and engaging with the young child — is able to do this because the neural connections in the brain are still growing in the very young baby.

“Literacy begins in the lap of a loving parent or caregiver who takes the time to personally interact with their infant. ‘Some parents may have reading problems themselves, so that reading out loud to their children may be intimidating

... In those cases — even if a parent just looks at a book and comments on the pictures with their child, ask the child questions about what's going on in the pictures — that's still ‘reading.’”

The motivation for children to read is the fun of listening to the story. This is heightened by the bond created between the parent or caregiver. Reading together usually creates a warm, nurturing and loving relationship between the child and the reader. It is wonderful if a parent or caregiver can create routines around reading such as having a bath, then reading a bedtime story like “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” each night (until the child wants another story), and then the child goes to sleep. This bedtime story routine gives your child something to look forward to, is consistent, predictable and helps build self-confidence in your child, as well as develops his love of reading. Soon you will be reading several bedtime stories each night.

For babies and toddlers, part of the power of reading is that it should be a bonding experience between parent or caregiver and child. Sure, strollers are very useful. But pick up and hug your child often as you read to him during the day or at bedtime. Reading is also a playful time. Many stories are fun and playful. Joke around with your child and with words. You can ask your child lots of questions about the story and listen to her answer. Reading is a hug.

(* Quotes from The BabyCenter.org)

BABYREAD'S GOAL is to read with children and their moms starting at birth. We hope to make a difference in the lives of the next generation of Oconee County residents. If you would like to help us, please contact our director, Caren von Hippel at babyread@charter.net or (864) 944-7881. You can learn more by going to babyread.org.

BabyRead donates books to Early Head Start

This year, for the third year in a row, BabyRead delivered wrapped holiday books to children at Seneca and Pickens Early Head Start. We just gave wrapped books for each of the 32 children at the Seneca Early Head Start to take home for the holidays. We also gave wrapped books for each of the 16 children at the Pickens Early Head Start to take home.



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Seneca Early Head Start is open from 7:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is free to eligible participants. There are four classes of eight children each, with two staff members in each classroom. There is a room for children infancy to 1 year old, the 1-year-old room, the room for 2-year-olds and a room for 3-year-olds. BabyRead has some of its volunteers going there to read to these children on a drop-in basis.

Pickens has two classrooms for eight children each. While BabyRead focuses on Oconee County, going to this center is much more convenient for one of our volunteers.

BabyRead is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, free, literacy outreach program. You read for two hours twice each month. We supply the books and snacks you give at each reading session.

We typically read to families in Seneca, Westminster, West Union and Walhalla. Our volunteers read to moms/caretakers and babies from birth to 18 months old, when the brain grows the most. Reading stimulates critical brain development.

Readers drive 25 minutes or less one-way from their homes and only during the day. We read only in public places — in town and school libraries. You schedule the meeting with the mom or caregiver.

Many children in our county come to school never having seen a book. These children may well flunk kindergarten or struggle, never learning how to read. They are just being pushed through school, graduating with limited skills and limited job opportunities. BabyRead is changing that, family by family.

Join us in this fulfilling experience. We need you! Being a reader is incredibly rewarding — children love being read to and often smile and jump up and down when they see you. In addition to the hugs, you get the satisfaction of seeing a child's attention span grow, his or her enthusiasm for books blossom and, for older children, his or her vocabulary increase. Most readers develop bonds with the mom or caregiver as well. In this relationship, the adult in charge increases their understanding of the importance of reading every day to the child. Often, self-confidence builds.

What satisfaction you will have from just giving four hours each month to BabyRead. You don't need an education background to do this. What you need is to be loving, kind and patient.

We need all kinds of volunteers: readers, administrators and others to help in signing up families at the elementary schools or selling tickets at a Belk Charity Day Sale. You can help by going to smile.amazon.com when you shop on Amazon. Five cents of every \$100 you spend is donated to BabyRead.

TO LEARN more, contact director Caren von Hippel at babyread@charter.net or (864) 944-7881 or go to babyread.org.