

Healthy Working MOVE

HANDY HINTS AND TIPS FOR USING A GAMES CONSOLE

There is a wide variety of games consoles on the market that come in various forms and are operated in different ways. The broad range of devices runs from portable handheld devices through to motion sensitive consoles plugged in to the television. Your choice of device is often led by your children and they may have more than one device; for example a fixed console at home and a handheld console for travelling.

It is important to understand how each type of console can be used safely so that you can advise your children appropriately. Manufacturers provide a lot of good advice that is often missed, so it is worth visiting their website or reading the safety section of the User Manual to see how they recommend their specific product is used.

This tip sheet provides good general advice regarding safe use of games consoles so that children avoid discomfort and reduce the risk of injury.

Sitting on comfy furniture

- Furniture, such as a sofa, molds to the body but offers little support to maintain a good posture. Encourage your child to change their position and take regular breaks from the playing the game.
- If your child's arms drop too low when they are using their gaming device it forces them bend their neck further to see the screen. To prevent this put a cushion or two on their lap to support their arms and keep the device in a more elevated position. This is also a good tip for when your child uses their device sitting on the floor.

Sitting on the floor

- Sitting positions where the knees are level or lower than the hips are best. When your knees are higher than your hips you naturally lean forward over arching your back to keep balanced.
- Side sitting or sitting with legs straight out are better, healthier sitting positions for your child.
- A games console plugged into the television is better than a handheld console because your child will look up to see the screen and naturally adopt a better neck and upper back posture.
- Encourage your child to move around and change positions regularly.

Laying down

- When your child uses a device lying on their front give them a cushion to place under their chest to support their weight and prevent them over arching their lower back.
- This may be a better position to use a handheld console as your child will not have to over arch their back and neck to look up and see a screen while playing.
- Encourage your child to stop using their device at least an hour before bedtime. This will improve the quality of your child's sleep.



Standing up

- When using a motion sensitive console ensure there is enough space for your child to play without knocking in to something or someone. Always use the wrist strap provided.
- Make sure your child takes regular breaks during prolonged gaming. Manufacturers recommend a change in activity for 15 minutes every hour. This is good advice to follow no matter what technology your child is using or what position they are in when using it.

Changing games/activities

- Some games require lots of repetitive movements, such as serving a virtual tennis ball with the arm or rapid fire shooting with the thumb. In general, it is better to change activities and use different parts of the body. Suggest regular changes in games if not changes in activities.

Carrying a handheld console

- Children should try to minimise the amount of weight they carry around. Pack heavier items so that they will be closest to their back when the bag is worn.
- Rucksacks should be worn with a tightened but comfortable strap over each shoulder.
- Single strap bags should be worn across the body and your child should regularly alternate which shoulder they carry it on.
- Encourage your child to be security conscious when carrying expensive devices.



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