

Child and Teen Checkups **CONNECTION**

April 2026



Raising Kids in the Digital Age

From TVs in the 1950s to today's smartphones, apps, and AI tools, technology has always been part of growing up, but the digital world our kids live in today is far more complex. It is no longer just about limiting "screen time." Children are growing up in a digital ecosystem that includes social media, gaming, streaming, apps, and artificial intelligence, all of which shape how they learn, play, and connect with others. While digital media can offer meaningful benefits like learning opportunities and social connection, many platforms are designed to keep users engaged for as long as possible. Features like autoplay, endless scrolling, and targeted ads compete for attention and can crowd out sleep, physical activity, and family time. Because of this, experts encourage families to focus less on the amount of screen time and more on the quality of content, the context in which it is used, and the importance of ongoing conversations.

The effects of digital media vary by age. For infants and young children, real-world interaction is critical, and too much solo screen use can interfere with development, sleep, and opportunities for play and bonding. School-aged children may experience challenges with sleep, attention, and school performance, along with reduced physical

CONTINUE READING ON THE NEXT PAGE

WHAT ARE CHILD AND TEEN CHECK UPS?

A **FREE** preventative health care benefit for children under the age of 21 who are eligible for Medical Assistance.

Why are they important?

They can:

- Find & treat health problems early on.
- Encourage healthy habits.
- Give a chance to ask questions about your child's health & development.

When should my child get a checkup?

- Between birth & 1 month.
- At 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, & 30 months.
- Every year starting at age 3 to 20.

Where can I get a checkup?

Your child's primary provider. Call or email Steele County Public Health for the local provider list.



CONTINUED: activity and family time. Teens face additional pressures from social media, including exposure to harmful content, online harassment, and social comparison, which can contribute to anxiety, depression, and sleep loss. At the same time, it can be difficult for families to simply “turn off” screens, especially with busy schedules and digital demands built into daily life.

Parents can support healthy habits by staying involved and creating a balanced approach. Developing a family media plan, having regular conversations about online content and privacy, and choosing high-quality, age-appropriate media can make a

big difference. Using screens together, delaying personal devices when possible, and being thoughtful about when a child is ready for a smartphone can help build healthy digital skills. Modeling good habits—like putting phones away during meals and before bedtime—and creating screen-free times and spaces also supports better sleep and stronger family connections. Technology is here to stay, but with thoughtful guidance and open communication, families can help ensure it supports children’s health and well-being rather than competing with it.

Tips to Navigate the Digital World

- **Create a Family Media Plan** that fits your family’s routines.
- **Have conversations** about how to stay safe online.
- **Model healthy digital habits.** Kids notice what we do. Put your own phone down during meals and bedtime. Kids copy what they see. Show them how to take breaks, put phones away and enjoy offline time.



Family Media Plan



Conversation Starters



The 5 Cs of Media Use

DENTAL CHECKUPS

- Dental coverage is a part of your Medical Assistance.
- Dental checkups are due every 6 months.
- Your child’s doctor will advise you to start dental checkups as soon as the first tooth appears, & no later than 12 months.
- Call or email Steele County Public Health for assistance in scheduling this appointment.



What is WIC?

A nutrition & breastfeeding program that helps families eat well & stay healthy.

Who is WIC for?

Pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants from birth to age 1, & children aged 1 to 5.

How do you qualify for WIC?

Scan for the WIC income guidelines & application or call (507) 444 - 7660 for more information.

