

# GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

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PLANET  
*Youth*

# ABOUT PLANET YOUTH

Planet Youth is an evidence-based primary prevention project that provides us with the opportunity to improve the long-term health and wellbeing of our children. Every two years, we survey all of the 15 and 16 year olds in our schools in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, and this gives us the information we need to make positive changes for the younger children coming behind them.

This booklet has been developed to bring some of that information to parents who have children starting post-primary school and we hope you find it useful.

The 4,339 teenagers that participated throughout the region in the November 2022 Planet Youth survey told us that:

**91%**

Easy to get Caring and Warmth from parents



**58%**

Spend 3 hours or more on social media daily



**38%**

Out after midnight



**56%**

Not getting enough sleep



**19%**

Get alcohol from parents



**83%**

Have a phone in their bedroom at night

**88%**

Feel safe in their community



**32%**

Reported self-harm once or more



**50%**

Exercise 3 times a week or more



**30%**

Drunk last month



**12%**

Have tried Cannabis



**30%**

Tried alcohol by 13

# FAMILY TIME

This was the third Planet Youth survey, and it had some really positive findings related to family life and the relationships that our teenagers have with their parents. 91% stated that it's easy to receive caring and warmth from their parents. Teens also report spending a lot of time with their parents and 92% stated that their parents know where they are in the evenings.

As they get older, it is important to maintain good quality communication with our teens and to stay connected, interested and engaged in what's happening in their lives. 79% of our teens said that it's easy to talk to their parents or carers about personal matters.

Having shared interests, regular family mealtimes, family activities and family meetings creates enjoyable time and space to chat with and listen to our teenagers.

As parents, we are the most important role models for our teens so it is important that we set a good example with our own behaviours.

**91%**

Easy to get caring and warmth from parents



# SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES

The Planet Youth survey showed us that 58% of our young people are spending 3 hours a day or more on social media. We know that too much screen time impacts upon homework and hobbies and can be detrimental to good mental health. Screen use should be kept to a maximum of **2 hours per day** after homework and other activities are completed.

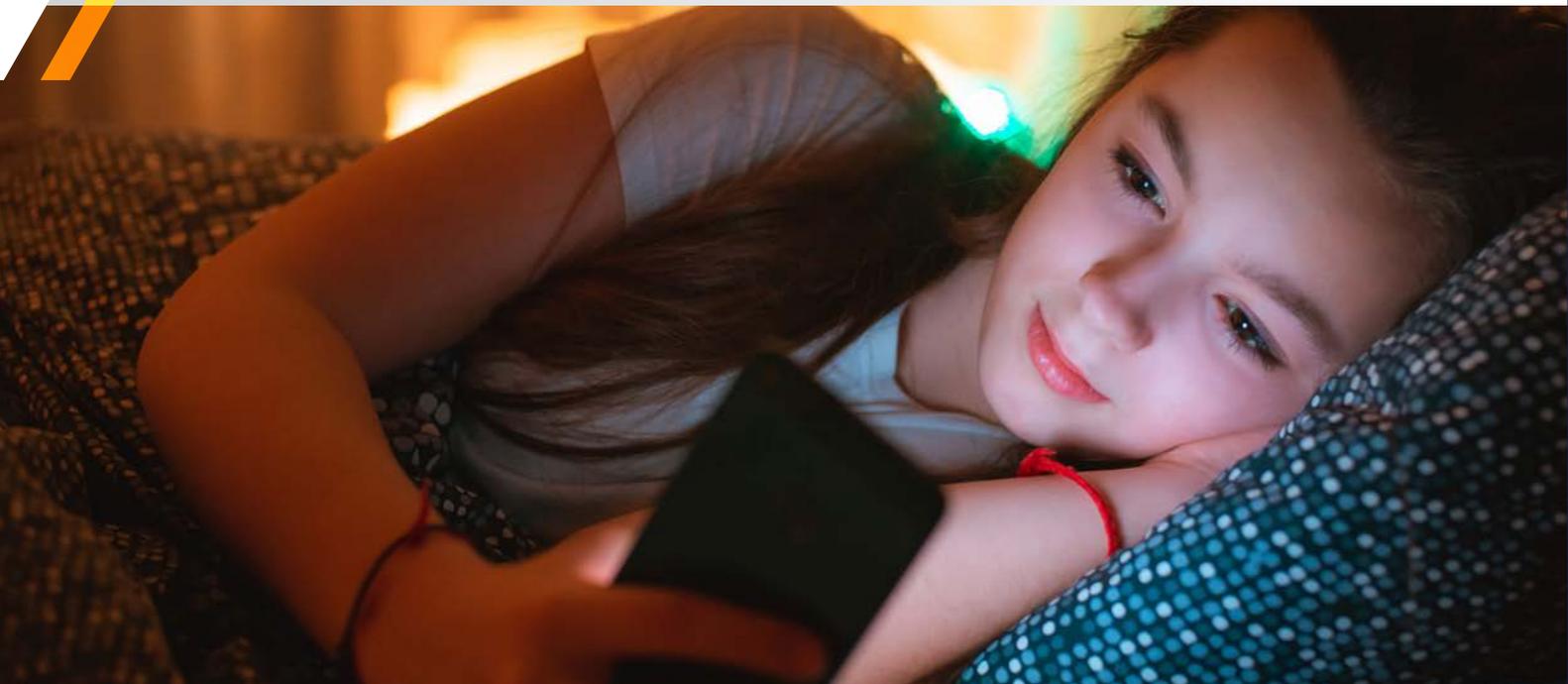
**Screens should be off at least one hour before bed and kept out of bedrooms after bedtime.**

If you can have these guidelines in place from first year they will become increasingly important as your child gets older. Talk to your child about their online life and be a good role model with your own screen use.

**58%**  
spend 3 hours  
or more on social  
media daily and



**83%** have a phone  
in their bedroom  
at night



# BEDTIME GUIDELINES

**56%**  
don't get  
enough  
sleep



The Planet Youth survey showed us that over half of our young people are not getting enough sleep. The suggested guidelines for bedtime are:

<b>FIRST YEAR</b>	<b>09:30PM</b>
<b>SECOND YEAR</b>	<b>09:45PM</b>
<b>THIRD YEAR</b>	<b>10:00PM</b>
<b>TRANSITION YEAR</b>	<b>10:15PM</b>
<b>FIFTH YEAR</b>	<b>10:30PM</b>
<b>LEAVING CERT YEAR</b>	<b>10:45PM</b>



Sleep is just as important to your child's development and well-being as nutrition and physical activity. It is recommended that teenagers get a minimum **8 to 10 hours** of undisturbed sleep per night. For example; a first year that has to get up at 07.30am should be asleep by 09.30pm in order to get their 10 hours of sleep.



## INTERESTS, HOBBIES & SPORTS

It is important that young people are encouraged to keep engaging in quality supervised, structured activities that interest them as they get older.

**Physical activity is important for good health and wellbeing** but not every child is interested in sports. Other hobbies and interests that provide opportunities to get involved in their community outside of school allow our children to further develop their social skills and build emotional resilience.

Good quality **supervised** and structured activities are also a known protective factor against substance use and anti-social behaviour.

# 50%

Exercise  
3 times a  
week or  
more



# 30%

Drunk in  
the last  
month



# 19%

Regularly  
get alcohol  
from parents



## ALCOHOL

As our children get older, they become more curious about alcohol and other drugs. They will also increasingly ask parents for access to alcohol for use at or before parties and events.

The survey shows us that teenagers that are given alcohol by their parents are twice as likely to have been drunk in the last month.

Use of alcohol or drugs at a young age can impair brain development and will increase the chances of developing a dependency later in life. The best thing we can do for our children is to defer all substance use for as long as possible.

# VAPING, SMOKING AND CANNABIS

Daily smoking rates and monthly cannabis use rates have decreased since the last survey. However, daily vaping rates have increased to 15% and this represents a threefold increase.

The use of vapes is unsafe for teenagers. Most contain nicotine and nicotine is a substance that is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development.

Using nicotine in adolescence can affect the parts of the brain that regulate attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase the risk of future addiction to other drugs. Additionally, vaping or inhaling any substance can cause harm to the lungs and respiratory tract.

Set a good example by being nicotine free and talk to your child or teen about why vaping is harmful for them.

## 15%

Are daily vapers



## 5%

Are daily smokers



## 6%

Used cannabis in the last month



You can find updates, resources, further information and links at the Planet Youth website.

[www.planetyouth.ie](http://www.planetyouth.ie)