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How Parents Can Protect Children from AI

Artificial intelligence is rapidly moving into everyday life via search engines, homework help, even apps disguised as games. While AI may be useful in some contexts, children often encounter it before they are ready to use it responsibly. Parents can take steps to guide, limit, or block access until kids are mature enough to handle these tools safely.

Device & Network Controls

Every device has built-in tools that help parents stay in charge.

- **Apple (Screen Time):** Restrict web content, set time limits, and block specific apps such as ChatGPT.
- **Android (Family Link):** Monitor usage, approve or block apps, and set limits on downloads.
- **Windows & Mac:** Both include parental control features that allow you to block unwanted apps and websites.

For added protection, you can use router-level controls to block AI websites (like chat.openai.com or character.ai) across every device on the home network. Third-party apps such as Qustodio, Net Nanny, or Bark can also block categories like "AI" or "chatbots," while monitoring usage and sending alerts.

Browsers & Searches

SafeSearch settings filter out explicit content, though they don't fully stop AI use. To close this gap, parents can add browser extensions (on Chrome, Edge, or Firefox) that blacklist AI websites and keep them inaccessible during browsing.

Account Management

Most AI platforms require users to be 13 years or older. Parents should avoid creating accounts for children and can set up child profiles on Apple, Google, or Microsoft devices. These prevent kids from signing up for services or downloading apps without approval. However, I do not feel comfortable having children's profiles on-line and personally would avoid this step.

Parenting Approaches That Work

Technology limits are only half the picture. The other half is parenting. Talk openly with your children about AI, what it is, why it may not be appropriate yet, and when it could be useful in the future. Encourage safe alternatives like age-appropriate educational apps. If AI is needed for schoolwork, use it together in shared spaces so children learn with guidance rather than alone. Although schools may be embracing AI in education, I question whether AI usage impairs cognitive development and should be avoided until college.

The Power of Parent-to-Parent Communication

Children are quick to notice when rules differ from house to house. That's why it's valuable for parents to talk with other parents in their schools, neighborhoods, and faith communities about AI use. A shared understanding creates consistency and reduces pressure on kids to "keep up" with peers who may have fewer restrictions. These conversations not only strengthen boundaries, they also build support networks where parents can share strategies, successes, and challenges.

A Word of Caution

Children are resourceful. If motivated, many will find ways around restrictions. That's why the most effective approach combines technical boundaries with conversations about safe, ethical use. Think of blocking AI not as punishment, but as age-gating, closing certain doors until children are ready to step through them responsibly.

At GMOScience, we believe in protecting children not just from what's in their food and environment, but also from digital influences that can shape how they think, learn, and grow. Parents are the first line of defense and together, communities of parents are even stronger.