

FAQs

Q: I am on the internet a lot because of work and school, does that mean I'm addicted?

A: No. Clinicians only look at non-essential use, outside of work or school obligations

Q: Are there different types of internet addiction?

A: Yes, there are several subtypes of internet addiction, such as excessive gaming, emailing, and online sexual preoccupations.

Q: Why do people get addicted to the internet?

A: For some, the internet is a form of escape, and it is used as an inadequate strategy for coping with stress. Others may have other issues such as Depression, which contribute to their addiction.

Contact Us

Please contact us for further information.

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Internet Addiction



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What is Internet Addiction?

Internet Addiction differs from drug or alcohol addiction in that the addiction is to a behaviour rather than to a substance. Aside from that there are many similarities between Internet Addiction and other addiction problems, including some of the symptoms, adverse consequences and treatments. Internet Addiction typically involves a pattern of preoccupations, compulsions or behaviours related to computer and internet use that are associated with significant personal distress or negative consequences to a person. The time consumed by internet use interferes with other important areas of a person's life like interpersonal relationships, work, recreation or school. It's important to note that while normal in moderation, the computer and internet use becomes problematic when it causes significant distress to the person, or the use has a negative impact on areas of the person's life.

The following Four Criteria are often used to Define Internet Misuse:

- (1) Excessive internet use, often associated with a loss of time
- (2) Withdrawal, defined as tension, anger or depression when a computer is inaccessible
- (3) Tolerance, marked by a need to increase the amount of time spent on the internet
- (4) Adverse consequences related to everyday life, such as arguments and conflicts in relationships

How common is Internet Addiction?

It's difficult to get accurate statistics on how many people have this problem because researchers and clinicians have not agreed on a common set of diagnostic criteria. However, many studies suggest that internet addiction is more prevalent in youth than in the wider adult population.

- According to Statistics Canada, 8 out of 10 Canadian households were connected to the internet in 2010 and over half of those connected use more than one device to use the internet.
- It's thought that Internet Addiction commonly begins when people are in their late 20s or early 30s and that there seems to be a 10 years gap between initial exposure to the internet and development of problematic use of the internet.
- Research has found that students are the most highly affected demographic.
- This problem seems more common in men than in women.

What are some of the Consequences of Internet Addiction?

- The internet can be a great source of information and social connection for people but use of it can easily become excessive and impairing.
- People who have Internet Addiction spend about 38 hours a week surfing the internet. This is nearly 8 times more hours per week than people who do not have problems with Internet Addiction.
- Students are prone to using the internet for non-essential purposes and can experience significant academic difficulties because of the accessibility of unrelated school web sites, chat rooms and games.
- Heavy internet use can affect many areas of a person's life, including their relationships with their friends, family or romantic partners. People with this problem can neglect their real-life relationships for their virtual/online relationships.
- Excessive internet use has been found to be linked with higher ratings of depression, loneliness and social isolation.

Internet Addiction can negatively impact many areas of life. Here is a breakdown of categories of impairment in daily living in people with Internet Addiction according to a 1996 study (Young, 1996).

Level of Impairment		
Area of Life that is Impaired	Mild	Severe
School	2%	58%
Relationships	2%	53%
Finances	10%	52%
Work	15%	51%
Physical	15%	0%

How is Internet Addiction Treated?

- There is mixed evidence to support treatment for this problem. There is some evidence to suppose the use of medications, however, results are inconclusive.
- Family or marital counseling may be helpful, and cognitive-behavioural therapies (CBT) in particular have shown some success in treating this problem.
- CBT works to address unhelpful thoughts that may contribute to pathological internet use and to target feelings of self-doubt, rumination, diminished self efficacy, and negative self-appraisals.
- It's thought that CBT helps people with Internet Addiction identify specific triggers for their compulsive behaviour such as particular internet applications, emotions, thoughts or life events.
- CBT can help build skills to manage negative emotions and control addictive impulses through techniques like muscle or breathing relaxation training.