

Excessive gaming among adolescents: Should we be concerned?

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Gaming Disorder: Some Facts

- Since the 1990s video games have become more technologically sophisticated and increased in popularity and are fun
- Games are easily accessible via computers, tablets, game consoles and smart phones
- Over 2 billion + active gamers worldwide (Newzoo, 2017)
- 97% of teenage boys play videogames; 83% of teenage girls (Pew, 2018)
- Excessive gaming has become one of the leading causes of college dropouts
- 48% of student gamers report gaming keeps them from studying; 9% use gaming for that reason (Pew, 2003)
- Primarily 2 categories
 - **ONLINE GAMING** - typically played simultaneously by players who communicate with each other in real time-cooperating or competing with one another
 - **OFFLINE GAMING** - typically played alone; well defined start and end

Gaming Disorder: Some Facts

- Online gamers spend more time gaming, report having 'online' friends and report more satisfaction
- 70% of gamers prefer online games compared to offline games (De Prato et al., 2010)
- Online gamers are more likely to be problematic
- CAMH (2016) estimated 13% of Ontario students-approximately 123,000 children have experienced symptoms of a video gaming problem (up from 9% in 2007). About 1 in 5 boys reported having problematic symptoms linked to their video gaming
- For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behaviour pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning (*normally* evident for at least 12 months)
- Worldwide estimates suggest 1-4% of gamers at risk of addiction
- Gaming 30 hrs/week+ has been associated with a gaming disorder

Why Excessive Gaming?

- Gaming fulfills specific emotional/psychological needs: escape, social connection, success
- Games are intentionally designed to keep players engaged (hooked) using behavioral psychology strategies
- Games are fully immersive and provide hyper-stimulation (dopamine)
- Gaming is a safe place to fail - real world failures can be permanent
- Gaming is a community and culture-relationships are meaningful (may be their only relationships)
- Gaming is normalized and socially accepted

Diagnostic Criteria for a Gaming Disorder

DSM 5 Section III: Internet Gaming Disorder



Proposed Criteria:

Persistent and recurrent use of Internet to engage in games, often with other players, leading to **clinically significant impairment or distress** as indicated by **5 or more of the following in a 12 month period:**

1. Preoccupation with Internet games.
2. Withdrawal symptoms when Internet gaming is taken away.
3. Tolerance: the need to spend increasing amounts of time engaged in internet games.
4. Unsuccessful attempts to control the participation in Internet games.
5. Loss of interests in previous hobbies & entertainment as a result of, and with the exception of, Internet games.
6. Continued excessive use of Internet games despite knowledge of psychosocial problems.
7. Has deceived family members, therapists, or others regarding the amount of Internet gaming.
8. Use of Internet games to escape or relieve a negative mood.
9. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of participation in Internet games.

Specify Severity:

- Mild, Moderate, or Severe

Gaming Disorder: Common Problems

- Familial discord
- Decrease in academic performance
- Sleep problems
- Eating problems
- Back & neck pain
- Eye fatigue
- Few professionals trained to deal with gamers

Help for Gaming Disorders

- Online help and support for parents
- On-Line Gamers Anonymous Organization
- Specialty clinics (e.g., China, South Korea, U.K.)
- Question of harm reduction vs abstinence
- Traditional CBT models - identifying the underlying causes
- Skill training-alternative use of time
- Gamequitters.com