Is Internet use unhealthy? A cross-sectional study of adolescent Internet overuse

# Details

## Year

2014

## DOI

10.4414/smw.2014.14061

## Issued

2014

## Language

English

## Authors

Surís J.;Akre C.;Piguet C.;Ambresin A.-E.;Zimmermann G.;Berchtold A.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Swiss Medical Weekly

## Publisher

EMH Swiss Medical Publishers, Ltd.

## Sample

3067 8th graders

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To assess whether problematic internet use
is associated with somatic complaints and whether this
association remains when checking for internet activity
among a random sample of adolescents living in the canton
of Vaud, Switzerland.
METHODS: Cross-sectional survey of 3,067 8th graders
(50.3% females) divided into average (n = 2,708) and problematic
(n = 359) Internet users and compared for somatic
complaints (backache, overweight, headaches, musculoskeletal
pain, sleep problems and sight problems) controlling
for sociodemographic and internet-related variables.
Logistic regressions were performed for each complaint
and for all of them simultaneously controlling variables
significant at the bivariate level.
RESULTS: At the multivariate level, when taken separately,
problematic internet users were more likely to have
a chronic condition (adjusted odds ratio [aOR] with 95%
CI: 1.58 [1.11:2.23]) and to report back pain (aOR: 1.46
[1.04:2.05]), overweight (aOR: 1.74 [1.03:2.93]), musculoskeletal
pain (aOR: 1.36 [1.00:1.84]) and sleep problems
(aOR: 2.16 [1.62:2.88]). When considered in the full model,
only sleep problems remained significant (aOR: 2.03
[1.50:2.74]).
CONCLUSIONS: Our results confirm that problematic internet
users report health problems more frequently, with
lack of sleep being the most strongly associated and seeming
to act as mediator regarding the other ones. Clinicians
should remember to screen for excessive internet use their
patients complaining of sleep-related problems, back or
musculoskeletal pain or overweight. Clinicians should advise
parents to limit the amount of time their adolescent
children can spend online for leisure activities. Furthermore,
limiting the number of devices used to connect to the
internet could help warrant enough sleeping time.

# Outcome

Problematic internet users report health problems more often than non-problematic users. There is (only) a direct effect on lack of sleep, which in turn may act as a mediator for more health issues.