



Living Well Newsletter

A monthly e-publication provided by Esse Health

Teen Internet Addiction: Signs, Symptoms and Recommendations

by Dr. John Madden, Pediatrician at the Esse Health Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine Office

Andrew is a depressed 13-year-old boy whose grades are slipping. He knows his parents would not approve of his behavior but he just keeps doing the same things anyway. When his parents confront him, he snaps at them. If pressed, he admits he has tried to stop because he has been so tired that he has fallen asleep in class, but he continues to stay up late doing it anyway and hides it from his family. These types of behaviors are commonly seen in children who use illicit drugs or alcohol, but they are also seen in children addicted to gambling, gaming or the Internet. Limited studies of the nervous system suggest that substance use disorders and behavioral addictions like Internet addiction even share the same pathways in the brain.

The Internet, just like television, can be a source of fascinating information, a powerful research tool and great entertainment. However, just like television, lots of use can be detrimental to children's developing minds. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours of screen time a day, which includes the Internet, computer games, console games, television, DVDs and anything with a screen. Multiple studies have shown that as the amount of time a child spends looking at a screen increases, so does his or her risk for having sleeping, attention and aggression problems, and difficulty with interpersonal relationships. Some of these effects may be due to the rapidly changing

intense imagery of television while others could be attributed to decreased time interacting with other people in favor of screens.

Although Internet Addiction is not a universally recognized psychiatric disorder, an increasing number of psychiatric professionals advocate for such recognition.

Most professionals would suggest that Internet use rises to the level of addiction when a child:

- 1) Uses the Internet excessively
- 2) Shows signs of withdrawal, including feelings of anger, tension or depression when the computer is inaccessible
- 3) Needs to use the Internet more and more and feels a need for better computer equipment, more software, more games, more consoles, etc.
- 4) Has adverse consequences from Internet use like increasing arguments, lying, poor school or vocational achievement, social isolation and fatigue.

It is unclear how many people are addicted to the Internet. Some studies suggest that among Internet-using adolescents the rate could be 10 percent or higher. Teens that are addicted to the Internet have increased rates of depression, ADHD



and excessive alcohol use. It is not always clear whether excessive Internet use is the cause or the effect of these other problems. Sometimes the Internet is used as a coping mechanism for disorders already present; sometimes Internet use leads to these problems in susceptible individuals. Rates of ADHD in those with Internet addiction have been as high as 25 percent in some studies.

There is very little known about the treatment of Internet addiction, but we do know that home monitoring of Internet use is important to avoid a wide range of negative consequences, including predation, bullying, loss of privacy and the risk of addiction. Keeping computer use limited to public areas of the house is a straightforward way to make sure Internet use is monitored. Such monitoring is no different than helping children make good choices with their television use. In combination with encouraging face-to-face interactions vs. Facebook interactions, parents can help children develop the skills necessary to build and maintain strong interpersonal relationships as well as decrease the risk of depression.

Recommendations:

- 1) Limit Internet access to public areas at least for certain times of the day and avoid having televisions and computer games in bedrooms.
- 2) Plan screen time, whether television or Internet use. For television, that is easy in the era of DVRs. Sit and watch a show you like then stop watching. For the Internet, which is more free-flowing, use an egg timer. Do the same for video games.
- 3) Stress to children that they should not put anything on the Internet that they would not want on the home page of Google, YouTube, ESPN, StLtoday.com, etc. (Nothing on the Internet is truly private.)
- 4) During exam times or other times when kids need to avoid screen time, delete games or programs or install passwords so the temptation is not there. Reinstall/remove passwords when exams or a report are complete.
- 5) If a child is having difficulty with the Internet or screen time and none of the above recommendations are helping, contact your pediatrician for additional resources.



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Fabulous Summer Foods: A Healthy Way to Enjoy the Best of Summer

By: Mindy Musselman, RD, LD, Esse Health

Growing up, my dad always used to say, “Just ninety short days. Then it’s back to school.” I never wanted to hear that phrase, but it did remind me to make the most of each summer. As adults, we can enjoy the “ninety short days” as time spent with friends, family and fabulous summer food.

One of the favorite foods for summer is the hot dog. Americans eat 2 billion hot dogs during the month of July, according to the Food Network. Find them at baseball parks, fairs, and on backyard grills. Since hot dogs are found at so many summer events, it is easy to overindulge. The average hot dog has 140 calories, 14 grams fat, and 540 milligrams sodium. Enjoying one at the ball game would be considered eating in moderation, but gobbling up three during the first inning could get you in trouble. For a healthy alternative, try turkey hot dogs on the grill. Concerned about nitrites or added preservatives? Try Beeler’s or Applegate Farm products.

Another indulgence of summer is pork steak. Like peaches in August, pork steak seems to be “in season” from June to August. The price is reasonable, but if you would also like something lower in fat, try pork tenderloin or loin chops.

Fruits and vegetables are abundant in summer months. Cherries are a good snack and make great

saucers. They are also full of vitamin C, which aids in healing and is a powerful antioxidant. Use a cherry pitter, which also works as an olive pitter, to remove seeds and add to fruit salads. The vibrant colors of tomatoes, watermelon, peaches and peppers let you know they are packed with antioxidants, yet delightfully low in calories and fat free!



After weeks of record high temperatures, it is important to stay hydrated. For a twist, try sun-brewed tea. Take your pick from green, white, traditional black tea or decaffeinated tea. Lemon and mint are great additions to tea.

Try these simple healthy summer recipes:

Sun-brewed Tea

Try this recipe with black tea, green tea, or a combination of both.

Ingredients:

- 4-6 tea bags
- 1/4 c sugar or Splenda
- 6-10 mint leaves, crushed
- 2 quarts water

Instructions:

1. Place water in large clear pitcher
2. Add mint, sugar, and tea bags

3. Cover pitcher and let stand in the sun 2-4 hours
4. Remove tea bags and serve over ice with additional mint sprigs, if desired

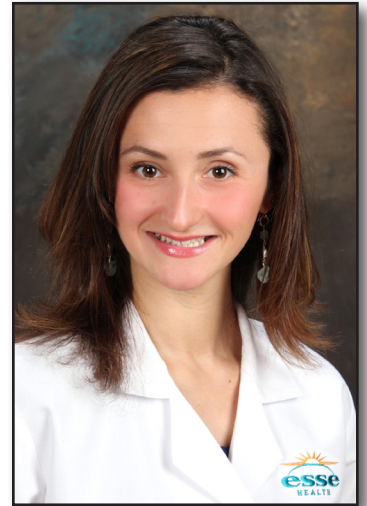
Mango Salsa

Ingredients:

- 1 mango, peeled, seeded, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded, chopped
- 1 green onion, chopped
- 2 tbsp chopped cilantro (optional)
- 1 can (15 oz) whole kernel corn, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 fresh jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped (optional)
- 2 tbsp lime juice
- 1 tbsp lemon juice

Instructions:

1. In a medium bowl, mix all ingredients.
2. Cover and allow to sit at least 30 minutes before serving for best flavor. Serve over baked fish or with tortilla chips.



Mindy Musselman is a Registered Dietitian and has appointments available for Esse Health patients at our South County and Illinois office locations.

To schedule an appointment with Mindy or for information about Esse Health dietitians in your area, please contact your Esse Health provider.

For more information about Esse Health, please visit us on-line at www.essehealth.com.