



## The impact

Psychological effects:

Overuse or dependence on technology may have adverse psychological effects, including isolation, attention deficit and hyperactivity problems, depression and anxiety, aggression, irritability, school truancy and conflict within relationships. Other negative impacts include losing track of time while on devices, falling behind on tasks and responsibilities, loss of motivation and guilt or defensiveness about time spent online.

Physical health effects:

Technology use may increase the risk of physical issues as well, including eyestrain, poor posture, reduced physical activity, sleep deprivation and poorer diet.

## Development

Children's brains are still developing and may be more sensitive to the effects of technology and its overuse than adult brains. Children who overuse technology may be more likely to experience issues, including lower academic performance, difficulties maintaining attention, delays in language, and impaired social and emotional intelligence.

## Changes in the brain

Increased screen time has been found to be associated with changes in brain structure and functioning. Increased time on devices is positively correlated with lower brain connectivity between regions controlling language and cognitive control and decreased integrity of white-matter pathways necessary for reading and language.





## Key Strategies

- Turn off real-time auditory & haptic notifications: Our devices have the tremendous ability to deliver real-time notifications from text messages, emails, and installed applications. While these can be helpful, we can get addicted to constantly receiving notifications or likes on their social media posts.
- Set limits on the time permitted for device usage. Disable auto-play on video streaming sites (Netflix, YouTube) and set pre-determined times to use devices that have a clear end point. Many social media sites, games, apps, and accounts now come with parental controls. Some wi-fi routers and accounts with internet service providers (ISPs) come with software that allows you to set up parental controls across your whole network. Family sharing on Apple devices enables parents to share purchased apps and manage their child's device.
- Re-direct screen to time to productive building activities: When you think about technology, there can be both pros and cons to many of the devices and applications we use. One of the biggest pros with technology is that instead of consumption, kids can learn how to create with technology.
- Consider the function of the behaviour: think about the reasons behind excessive device use and the concrete rewards that come from it (e.g., the experience of strong affect, or connecting with online friends) to better understand what this need is meeting.
- Therapy: work with a psychologist to reduce the impact of excessive device usage, build healthy coping strategies and learn to manage urges. Work with a psychologist can also support co-occurring and underlying mental health symptoms such as depression and anxiety.

