

Fact Sheet: Child and Youth Problematic Gaming

What is Gaming?

Gaming includes any activity that is digital in nature that contains skill and reward. These can be puzzles, role-playing, educational, sport, first person shooters, action, real-time strategy, simulations, massively multiplayer online, and others.

How Common is Youth Gaming?

- 85% of youth play video games
- 29% of gamers are under the age of 18
- 3-12% of regular youth gamers display signs of addiction

Increased Risk Factors for Problematic Use

- most patterns of youth gaming are not cause for concern
- social factors, personality traits, and pre-existing comorbidities may increase the risk of problematic use
- those with impulsivity, depression, anxiety, trauma, unstable care patterns, parental neglect, and social disorders show a higher rate of problematic use

Problematic Gaming is associated with:

- problems at school and more physical health problems
- lower school grades on average and higher rate of attention problems
- lack of real life social relationships and/or conflict in relationships
- increased depression and anxiety
- loss of previously enjoyed healthy leisure activities

How Do I Know I Might Have a Problem with Gaming? Warning signs include:

- negative impacts in physical, emotional, relational, and educational areas of your life
- preoccupation and obsessive thought patterns about gaming
- problematic thoughts, including self-doubt, low self-efficacy, and negative self-appraisal, such as: "I am worthless offline, but online I am someone."
- negative self-view, and using the internet to create a different version of yourself, as well as gain feedback
- belief that you have more competence, confidence, comfort, and self-worth with online interactions and communications than with face-to-face contact
- signs of addiction including: salience (obsessive thoughts), mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal (anger and irritability when not playing), conflict, and relapse.

For more information and support, contact: AHS Youth Addiction Services at 1-866-332-2322 (toll free within Alberta).