

Fact Sheet: Child & Youth Problematic Gaming

Youth & Digital Technology: Growing Up Online Toolkit

What is Gaming?

Gaming refers to any activity that is digital in nature that contains skill and reward. These can be puzzles, role-playing games (RPGs), educational, sport, action & first-person shooters (FPs), real-time strategy, simulations, massively multiplayer online (MMOs), and others.

How Common is Youth Gaming?

Gaming is a widespread activity among youth, with most engaging in moderate, non-problematic use. However, some individuals develop patterns of excessive gaming that interfere with daily life.

- 85% of youth play video games
- the prevalence of internet gaming disorder (IGD) is estimated at 5.5% among children and youth

Increased Risk Factors for Problematic Use

- most youth engage in gaming without significant negative effects. However, certain factors may increase the risk of problematic gaming behaviors
- 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."

For more information, contact

informationandcystandards@recoveryalberta.ca

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- 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 (gaming as a coping mechanism), tolerance (needing longer play sessions for the same satisfaction), withdrawal (anger and irritability when not playing), conflict (family, school, or work problems due to gaming), and relapse (returning to excessive gaming after attempts to cut down).

If you need help or support, contact: Addiction Helpline Recovery Alberta Youth Addiction Services at 1-866-332-2322 (toll free within Alberta). [Mental health & addiction helplines | Recovery Alberta](#), <https://recoveryalberta.ca/>

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