

Other Addictions

There are a number of other addictions that affect the lives of people, families and communities...

Food

Food addiction can be referred to as a type of eating disorder. For instance, people who are addicted to food find it difficult to help themselves around certain food types. Highly palatable foods (which are rich in sugar, fat and/or salt) can affect the brain's chemistry and induce intense feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, causing the person to repeatedly eat them.

Recognising a food addiction

People can identify food addiction in a loved one if they exhibit the following behaviours:

- Consuming more food than they can physically tolerate
- Eating even when they are no longer hungry
- Gorging excess amounts of food in secret
- Taking desperate measures to obtain certain foods
- Irritability
- Eating uncontrollably, to the point where they become ill

Dangers of food addiction

There are physical and psychological dangers of eating, which can include:

- Unhealthy weight gain (obesity)
- Low self-esteem
- Heart disease
- Digestive problems
- Diabetes
- Liver/kidney disease
- Reduced sex drive
- Sleep disorders
- Lethargy
- Panic attacks
- Emotional numbness
- Financial problems
- Career issues
- Social detachment

Internet

The internet has penetrated many cultures and an overreliance on the worldwide web has become something of a disorder. Research puts the number of internet addicts in the USA and Europe at 8.2% of the entire population. A person is said to be addicted to internet activities such as social media, texting, online gaming, search engines and online shopping when they:

- Isolate themselves from friends and family in favour of the internet
- Feel sensations of euphoria and satisfaction when they use the internet
- Forfeit work and other responsibilities because of the internet
- Stay on the internet longer than intended
- Feel miserable, depressed and frustrated when they try to cut back on internet use

Internet addiction can cause physical and psychological issues, which include:

- Poor personal hygiene
- Unhealthy weight gain
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Poor work and academic performance
- Social detachment

Online Gaming

Video game addiction is marked by an uncontrollable urge to constantly play computer games.

If people are addicted to video games, they will exhibit signs of irritation, frustration and misery when they are unable to partake in this activity. They will also be unable to focus on other engagements aside from gaming when they are addicted to this particular activity.

This can cause certain consequences in their life, which include:

- Poor academic performance
- Poor work performance
- Sleep deprivation (which can lead to related health effects)
- Mood changes
- Social detachment
- Financial problems

Problematic Social Media usage

Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU) refers to social media use that becomes difficult to control and continues despite causing harm or significant disruption to a person's life. Researchers often describe it as sharing characteristics with behavioural addictions, even though it is not currently a formal diagnosis in major psychiatric classification systems.

Loss of control

- The person finds it difficult to limit their use, even when they intend to spend less time online. They may repeatedly check platforms automatically or use them for much longer than planned.

Preoccupation

- Social media occupies a large amount of mental attention. Individuals may frequently think about notifications, posts, likes, messages, or what they will post next.

Continued use despite negative consequences

- Use continues even when it is contributing to problems such as poor sleep, reduced productivity, academic difficulties, conflict with family members, or worsening mental wellbeing.

Withdrawal-like experiences

- Some people report feeling anxious, irritable, restless, or uncomfortable when they cannot access social media for a period of time.

Increasing use

- Over time, individuals may spend more time on platforms to achieve the same level of satisfaction, stimulation, distraction, or social connection.

Displacement of other activities

- Important activities such as work, study, hobbies, exercise, face-to-face social interaction, or sleep may be neglected because social media use takes priority.

Impacts on the individual (Social Media usage)

- **Mental health and emotional wellbeing** such as Increased anxiety, Low mood or depression, Reduced self-esteem, Greater social comparison, Fear of missing out (FOMO) and Increased stress and emotional dependency on online feedback.
- **Loss of sleep** such as late-night scrolling, notification checking, and excessive screen time can disrupt sleep quality and duration, leading to fatigue and reduced daytime functioning.
- **Reduced work, school, and productivity** such as frequent interruptions and compulsive checking can reduce concentration, productivity, learning, and task completion. people may struggle to engage in sustained attention.
- **Poorer physical health** with indirect effects such as more sedentary behaviour, reduced physical activity, eye strain, headaches, and sleep-related health consequences
- **Reduced autonomy** with many individuals report feeling that social media is controlling their behaviour rather than serving as a tool they consciously choose to use. This perceived loss of control is often one of the clearest signs of a problematic relationship with social media.

Impacts on others (Social Media usage)

Family relationships

- Excessive use can contribute to:
- Reduced quality time
- Relationship conflict
- Feelings of neglect
- Increased arguments about device use
- Family members may feel they are competing with screens for attention.

Friendships

- Online interaction can sometimes crowd out face-to-face interaction, leading to weaker social engagement and reduced presence during in-person activities.

Workplace impacts

For employers and colleagues, problematic use may contribute to:

- Reduced productivity
- Missed deadlines
- Distracted meetings
- Lower work quality and these can affect team performance as well as the individual user.

Parenting and caregiving

- Where a parent or caregiver is frequently absorbed in social media, children may receive less attention and interaction. Researchers have increasingly examined how "technofence" (technology-related interruptions) can affect family relationships and child development.

Sex

Sex addiction is a disorder whereby a person cannot control their sexual behaviour. Uncontrollable sexual thoughts and actions affect their ability to maintain relationships, hold down jobs and undertake important responsibilities.

Sexual dependency, compulsive sexual behaviour, and hypersexuality are other terms used for sex addiction. The condition is also known as satyriasis in men, and nymphomania in women.

While there is still debate as to whether sex addiction is an actual addiction, ample damage can occur from a compulsive need to always engage in sexual activities. Dangers associated with sex addiction include:

- Risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases
- Problems with relationships (especially marriage)
- Career downturn
- Financial and legal problems

Shopping

Shopping addiction is a worrying behavioural disorder that is marked by an intense preoccupation to shop and purchase various items. If people suffer from this sort of addiction, they can have an uncontrollable

urge to embark on spending sprees and will feel miserable when you do not. They may also experience a sense of euphoria and satisfaction after making purchases. However, they could also begin to feel low after doing so, prompting the continuous cycle of considering more purchases.

Research has found that both gender and age play a role in shopping addiction, with young women in their teens and twenties suffering from this issue the most.

There are also co-occurring mental disorders that often accompany this sort of addiction, including depression and generalised anxiety. Studies have shown that a mood disorder can result in shopping addiction, while the buying disorder could cause one or two mood disorders as well.

If people become a compulsive buyer, they may experience certain issues that could affect both their health and social life. A common problem is the tendency to be overwhelmed by debt. They could also experience issues such as:

- Feeling worthless
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions and remembering
- Depression
- Risk of losing familial and social relationships
- Sleeping problems

Work addiction

Work addiction has a number of identical behavioural patterns with many other forms of addiction – notably a compulsive need to engage in an activity, despite being aware of the related consequences. Work addiction stems from the need for career progression and to compulsively meet lofty targets. Research has shown that most people addicted to work have parents with high expectations concerning professional success.

If individuals are addicted to work, they will put in extra hours at your place of work, despite the effects it may have on your mental and physical health, personal life, family and relationships. They will also experience low personal satisfaction when they are addicted, causing them to work even more. Common signs that indicate an addiction to work include:

- Perfectionism
- The need to control
- Self-neglect
- Feeling that nothing is adequate
- Irritability and impatience

There are negative consequences associated with work addiction. They include:

- Depressive symptoms
- Increased anxiety
- Burnout that could lead to severe health problems

- Shortness of breath and chest pains
- Risk of addiction to harmful drugs and other substances in order to stay alert and energised for work