

# Excessive screen use and gaming during #COVID19

Hundreds of millions of people worldwide are required to stay at home to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the disease, including young people. Children have been out of school and as a result, many of them may be spending more time on screens to complete online activities as part of homeschooling, socializing with peers or playing video games given that outdoor activities may be restricted due to lockdowns. Young people can be particularly vulnerable to the harms associated with excessive screen use and gaming including unhealthy sedentary lifestyles, exposure to harmful content (violent or sexual), misinformation about COVID-19, cyberbullying, development of gaming disorder, or engagement in online gambling.

## What you need to do

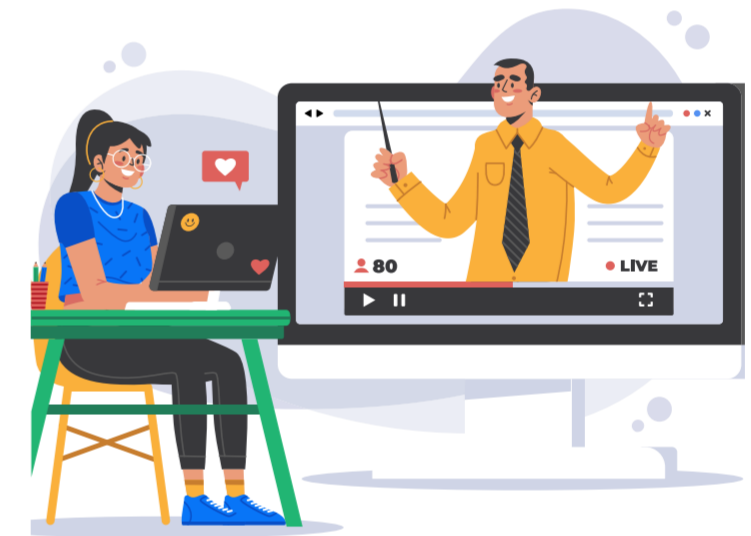
### Parents and guardians

- Educate children about how to use internet safely and to be vigilant
- Set clear rules about screen use
- Activate parental control features
- Emphasize other options for having fun (e.g. cooking together, reading, board games, arts, crafts, dancing, exercising)
- Maintain regular sleep routines for children
- Encourage healthy eating



### School authorities

- Develop or update online safety guidelines and code of conduct, including policies and rules about cyberbullying and communicate them with students, parents and guardians
- Maintain and promote online counselling services for students
- Provide training for teachers about online counselling and how to detect signs of exposure to online threats and abusive or neglectful experiences at home



### Health and social care providers

- Inform parents and caregivers about the risk of excessive screen use and gaming, how to detect and prevent it, and available support
- Be vigilant about this during COVID19 and include it in your assessments, particularly for children and adolescents
- Include, whenever possible, online counselling sessions for people with gaming and gambling disorders



### Digital technology and gaming companies

- Ensure safety measures and parental control features are included in online activities and games
- Develop gaming programmes that engage young people in physical activity



### Policy-makers

- Implement regulations to prevent harmful, offending and criminal online activities targeting young people
- Establish or expand the capacity of helplines, hotline, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to enhance online safety for children, and provide support for parents and children



**Take urgent action to ensure online safety for young people during this COVID-19 pandemic.**

