



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.

What you need to know

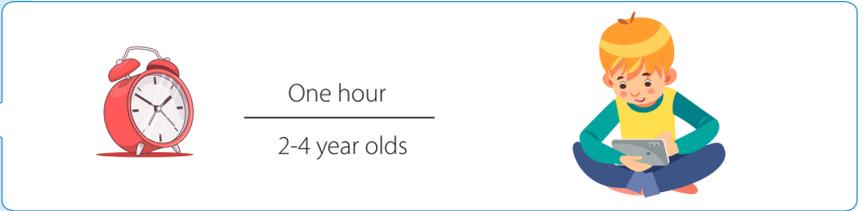
Young people are vulnerable to the harms of excessive screen use and gaming including unhealthy sedentary lifestyles (e.g. physical inactivity), reduced sleep or day-night reversal, malnutrition, headaches, neck pain, exposure to harmful content (violent or sexual), misinformation about COVID-19, cyberbullying, development of gaming disorder, and engagement in online gambling.

Physical inactivity Day-night reversal Malnutrition Headaches, neck pain Cyberbullying

Excessive screen use and gaming affects a person's mood, and ability to focus, complete school tasks and control outbursts. It negatively impacts their relationships with family members and peers, and takes priority over the basic functions (e.g. eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, exercise).



Screen use including playing video games is not recommended for 1-year old infants, **should be limited** to no more than 1 hour per day for children 2–4 years old, and **should be managed** in older age groups as well.



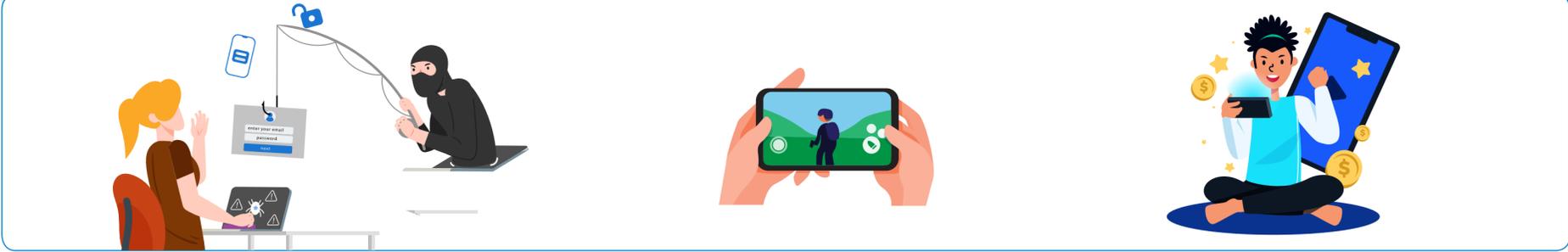
Children diagnosed with gaming disorder. Continue treatment during this pandemic. Keep in touch with your child's therapist or other medical caregiver by email, phone or other remote communication methods.



Cyberbullying can happen on different digital platforms (phones, apps, social media, online interactive games). Be vigilant about warning signs of cyberbullying in your children (e.g. using their device more or less than before, becoming withdrawn, anxious or depressed).



Increasingly, online games include gambling-like elements (e.g. loot boxes, microtransactions) and vice versa. Marketing of video games has increased during this pandemic. Games with gambling-like elements may have financial implications and increase the risk of migration to gambling.



Recognize the signs of excessive screen use and take immediate action to ensure online safety for young people during this COVID-19 pandemic.

