

The Teenager's Guide to the Safe Use of Internet Pornography

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How much online porn is there?

According to Wendy and Larry Maltz, co-authors of *The Porn Trap: The Essential Guide to Overcoming Problems Caused by Pornography*, there are more than 400 million pages of pornography on the Internet. According to Dr. Patrick Carnes, one of the world's leading experts in the area of online sexual behavior, commercial pornography websites, magazines, books, DVDs, and cable television generate almost \$320 billion annually worldwide. To put this in some perspective, in the United States alone, pornography revenues are larger than all the combined revenues from *professional football, baseball, and basketball*.

Dr. Carnes also reports that an estimated seventy-two million individuals visit online or “cyber” pornography websites each year. Approximately twenty five percent of all search engine requests are pornography related. Ten percent of adult Internet users believe they are “cybersex” (online) addicts. Twenty percent of adults in the USA report having intentionally visited pornographic websites. Did you know that thirty percent of visitors to adult pornography sites are women?

The average age of first exposure to online pornography is **11 years old** and seventy percent of teenagers report they have seen pornographic images online.

Does cyber porn come with instructions?

Despite the amazing growth in internet pornography and the growth in technology that make Internet pornography very accessible to all (such as laptops and mobile devices), internet porn does not come with a set of instructions or any type of warning about it's possible danger.

So, why doesn't “cyber” porn come with guidelines? Well, mainly, the online porn industry doesn't want guidelines or regulations, because they want to sell porn to anyone who can pay for their product – including teens. The porn industry wants as many customers as is possible, and there is really no better target audience than teens – as they can develop a life-long dependence on porn use.

As for high school “sex ed” programs, it appears the availability and quantity of online porn has gotten well out in front of teachers, principals, health educators,

and parents in terms of developing an open, honest and informed discussion about the possible benefits and dangers of pornography accessed via the internet. I think it is fair to say at this point in time adults haven't figured out how to approach the topic of online porn – so teens are left to figure cyber-porn on their own.

Given the absence of clear and reliable information for teens about online pornography I decide to write this manual. I hope you find it helpful!

Is any amount of “cyber porn healthy?”

Let's start with the most basic question: ***what amount and what type of pornography is appropriate or safe?*** Is all pornography unhealthy? Are there websites that are educational and provide good information while using sexually graphic images?

Certainly not all online sexual activity has a negative impact on teens or adults. A recent study estimated nearly eighty percent of those who view online sexual pornography are "recreational users" and do not report any problems related to their online behavior. Both teens and adults report using the internet to research sexual information on issues such as preventing sexually transmitted diseases, purchasing and reviewing options for contraception, and exploring sexuality. “Cyberspace” allows teens and adults to explore sexual fantasies, explore sexual preferences, and learn about different forms of sexual expression in a safe and secure home environment.

However, approximately 20% of online porn users struggle to control their behavior and experience ***devastating and long-lasting consequences***. As I will discuss in greater detail, some people become compulsive in collecting and viewing pornography, others cross legal boundaries, while others find themselves spending 10+ hours each day online in search of sex or romance.

The risks outweigh the benefits

So, to my way of thinking, although online porn may be fun and exciting for some teens (and adults) and pose no emotional or physical health risks, the down side

far outweighs the up side. After having worked with teens and adults with online porn problems, I think the risk is so great ***the best approach is to stay clear of porn sites altogether.*** I can't tell you how many times I have heard teens and adults say: ***"I just wish someone had told me how easy it is to get out of control with cyber porn."***

My position is not about whether online pornography is good or bad or right or wrong from a moral perspective or a religious perspective. Simply put, I think porn has the potential to seriously damage your emotional, sexual, physical and social health. I am certain no one will ever **regret NOT using porn** – they will only regret being exposed to and using porn and losing control of their lives.

As Jason (age 17) explained to me: ***"I thought it would fun to check out different porn sites. There was so much to look at online! The weird thing was I never expected to get so focused on porn. It just kind of happened. I found that I got bored of images really fast So I looked for new images that were more intense ... Embarrassing stuff ... Before I knew it, I was online all of the time. Everything fell apart really fast – school work, hanging with friends, family time. I just didn't care about anything except getting back online to look at porn."***

So what is pornography?

The subject of what defines pornography has been debated and discussed for decades by parents, educators, judges, attorneys, religious groups, and experts in the field of sexual health and sex education. One can define pornography simply by describing certain types of images. In other words, we could agree specific types of images displaying specific types of activities are what make an image "pornographic."

My preference is to use the definition of pornography developed by Wendy and Larry Maltz. Their definition does not rest on how sexually graphic an image is or the type of sexual activity displayed in the image. Rather, they believe the best way to define pornography is in terms of the ***type of relationship we have with the image.***

The goal of the porn industry is to create sexual stimulation in its viewers/customers. This stimulation helps create a powerful and lasting **relationship** to the images and activities displayed. So, by this definition, pornography can be **any** image or video that involves us in a **relationship that produces intense sexual arousal** -- that is, “turns us on” or excites us in a sexual way.

To say we have a **relationship with pornography** means we can become **attached** to images and videos in a way similar to our attachment to real people. And, in fact, teens and adults who consistently view online pornography often do develop a very strong attachment -- so strong they cannot stop looking for images and then engage in increasingly self-destructive behaviors online.

As we saw with Jason, one can go very quickly from casually surfing the net, to taking a look at sexual images out of curiosity, to using online porn on an occasional basis, to spending hours searching for websites that offer strange and confusing sexual pictures, to pornography becoming an addiction!

Cyber porn can take over your life!

What does it mean to say cyber porn can take over a person's life? It means with a “click” here and a “click” there, one can become completely preoccupied with the sexual stimulation images and videos create. When masturbation accompanies viewing these images, then pornography provides a very powerful and pleasurable experience, **an experience so pleasurable many “regular” people want to have this experience over and over and over throughout the course of each day.**

Why is it so difficult to stop a relationship with pornography? Why is it that after a “click” here and a “click” there, a teen can easily find himself/herself in chat rooms and other sites on the internet that are difficult, if not impossible, to resist? Can't you just say: "This is too much. I've had enough. I won't look any more"?

The difficulty with cyber porn is that it provides an experience of **intense sexual pleasure that is combined with immediate gratification.** Pornography can

provide a person with whatever sexual experience they want, no matter how extreme, strange, or forbidden, without having to take into consideration the needs, feelings, or values of a sexual/romantic partner. In the “porn world,” you can do whatever you want, whenever you want, with whoever you want, without having to think about anyone else.

Pornography is so powerful as a source of sexual excitement that it produces physiological changes in our body (such as an erection) **automatically**. What is really amazing about cyber porn is sexual stimulation even happens when the viewer **does not like the idea of pornography or feels uncomfortable with pornographic images**. With respect to triggering an intense sexual response, our eyes see no difference between sex on a screen and sex in real life.

So, as far as our body goes, when you are watching pornography, it is as if you are “there” (present in the three dimensional world). What makes pornography especially hard to control is it enters our body directly through our eyes and ears. This gives pornography a direct connection to our nervous system and, more specifically, **the pleasure center in our brain**.

Cyber porn can change your brain!

You probably didn't know pornography can actually rewire and change your brain. This is the primary reason people who use porn become addicted. When you look at pornography your brain releases a very powerful chemical called dopamine. Dopamine is released whenever we get sexually aroused. It is also released by other pleasurable activities -- including kissing, flirting, cigarette smoking, and drug use. **Pornography causes the dopamine production in your brain to increase dramatically - which means porn feels REALLY good.**

This increase produces a **drug like high** that many researchers who study pornography think is **similar to the high produced by crack cocaine**. Pornography also triggers the production of the hormone testosterone, which is connected to sexual desire. To give online porn added power, it also increases the production of other "**feel good**" chemicals in our brain, such as adrenaline, endorphins, and serotonin.

As Claire (age 19) told me: ***“I would look at porn and get really excited. It was fun to look at different web sites. The search was really amazing because I would get lost for hours, feeling high along the way. I felt great. I was up. I was filled with energy. Then I would crash and feel drained and tired and embarrassed.”***

In addition to ***“feel good”*** chemicals in the brain, powerful human “bonding” hormones are also released when a person watches pornography and is sexually stimulated. Hormones such as oxytocin and vasopressin are released and they contribute to establishing a ***lasting emotional attachment to pornography.***

As David (age 16) told me: ***“Over time I got attached to porn – like it was a real person. I even had fantasies that I had a relationship with women in the pictures and videos. It really felt ... well, REAL.”***

Unfortunately, by increasing the production of these pleasure chemicals in your brain, pornography also ***reduces*** your body's ***natural ability*** to produce these chemicals under ***normal life*** circumstances. In other words, the more often you are sexually stimulated by online porn, the more often you engage in a sexual relationship with pornographic media, ***the more difficult it can be to produce these same chemicals in a romantic and sexual relationship with a real person.***

As Stephen (age 19) explained to me: ***“After a few months of looking at porn and masturbating to porn videos, I couldn’t get excited by my girlfriend. She was hot. But compared to the women in porn, she wasn’t exciting. My body just wouldn’t get excited or turned unless I was looking at porn. It was so weird. Only porn would work to turn me on. My girlfriend was hurt and angry. Now I feel stuck in the porn world. I wish I had never started with cyber porn.”***

Cyber porn is a lot like gambling!

Developing compulsive or addictive relationship with cyber porn also happens because the process of looking at images is similar to ***gambling***. As a person scrolls through images/videos they find certain “hits” to be highly stimulating and exciting -- ***just like landing on the jackpot on a slot machine.*** Other times the images are boring, repetitive, and therefore similar to pulling the lever on a slot machine and “losing.” This is called an intermittent reward system.

This simply means that some of the time you scroll through pornographic images you get the hit or the high you want, and other times you don't. It's the **search** for a "winning combination" (a winning image) that keeps a person interested in pornography. So, the bottom line message here is the gambling like nature of cyber porn, combined with intense sexual stimulation produced by cyber porn, **doubles its potential for creating addiction.**

It is also important to know nearly half of children who have been interviewed about their exposure to online pornography say that they can't forget the **first image** they were exposed to. This goes to show how powerful pornographic images on the Internet can be: a single image can **forever be placed in our memory bank FOREVER!**

As Spencer (age 17) explained to me: ***"I can remember the first picture I ever saw. My brother and his friend showed it to me. I felt a rush of excitement. I then started to look online, trying to find just the best image. When I hit the right image I was excited and happy. When I found boring images I would feel sad, like I lost something important. The chance of finding the perfect image kept me going and going and going."***

Cyber porn is a form of sex education

One of the hidden dangers of pornography is the way it functions as a very powerful form of **sex education**. The problem is the educational "messages" of pornography are distorted, misleading, and in most cases, **completely wrong**. Wendy and Larry Maltz explain the most misleading educational message of pornography is "porn sex" is "great sex" and that one should strive for casual and impersonal sexual encounters.

Pornography also communicates that no one ever feels exploited or taken advantage of after sex. Cyber porn says **any type** of sexual activity is enjoyed by women and women in "real life" are supposed to look and act like "porn stars." Pornography actually teaches young men that women are "sex objects" and are available to please men without needing to be treated in a loving, respectful, tender, and romantic manner.

As Daniel (age 33) explained: ***“To be totally honest, I got most of my sex education from porn. I really thought women were supposed to look and act like porn stars – and when real women didn’t look or act like porn stars, I lost interest and went back online. When I told real women what I wanted sexually they thought I was a freak.”***

In one study of 471 teens, ages 13 to 18, researchers found the more often young people looked cyber porn, the more likely they were to have a recreational attitude toward sex – that is, to view sex as a **purely physical function like eating or drinking**. In the same study, researchers found a relationship between pornography use and the belief that it isn’t important to have affection for people to have sex. **Boys were much more likely to hold these views than girls and they tended to hold these attitudes more strongly when they perceived the pornographic material as realistic.**

Cyber porn: the magic pill to make pain go away

Many teens (and adults) also use cyber porn as a way of dealing with negative feelings, such as anger, loneliness, rejection, depression, and anxiety. By coming home and tuning in to pornographic images, videos, chat rooms, etc., a teen can get rid of negative feelings and replace them with a fantasy experience that produces feelings of excitement, pleasure, power, and confidence. It is easy to forget that what happens online is a fantasy and that all of the feelings created online part of a fantasy.

It can be pretty hard to leave this fantasy world when one’s reality may feel depressing because of rejection from peers at school or family problems. The bottom line here is pornography can function like a magic pill: “take one” and all of the complicated and emotionally draining problems of everyday life vanish. **The problem is the more you live in fantasy (and this goes for video games as well) the bigger your problems become. Hiding and withdrawing from life only makes life more difficult in the long run.**

Cyber porn withdrawal and detox

Teens and adults who use pornography to escape from real-world problems can develop cravings similar to the cravings described by drug addicts. Those who have developed a compulsive relationship with pornography often say they spend significant amounts of their time thinking about pornography when they are off-line. **Many people say they simply cannot think about anything other than when they will be able to get back online and continue their search for pornographic material.**

Sadly, some teens lose all interest in their off-line relationships with friends and family, neglect chores and homework, neglect their health by drinking caffeine/energy drinks, and disrupt their sleep by staying up all night to masturbate. Some teens find themselves concealing their Internet activity, lying to parents and friends about what images they are viewing (while feeling both guilty and ashamed).

According to Wendy and Larry Maltz withdrawing from cyber pornography can be filled with agitation, depression, and sleeplessness which is **identical** to the experience of detoxing from alcohol, cocaine, and other hard drugs. Imagine unplugging from cyber porn only to experience sadness, anger, anxiety, and physical symptoms like the flu -- and have to undergo therapy for an extended period of time just to get back to a normal state of brain functioning? Did you know that it can take as long as **18 months** to get your brain healthy after you stop using cyber porn? That's a long time and a lot of really hard work!

As Charlie (age 18) explained: ***“When I was offline, all I could think about was getting back online – to see my favorite porn fantasy girlfriends. If I was off line for very long, like going to school, I would get nervous and depressed. I couldn't focus at school. I stopped sleeping and even went for periods when I would just drink Red Bull. I lied to everyone so I could keep going. Finally, my parents figured things out. I went in to treatment. It was so hard. It was like you hear about detox. It took me 9 months to get my life back.”***

Addiction to cyber porn? Not me!

You may be asking yourself just about now: “**Am I really the type of person who would get addicted to cyber pornography?**” As noted above, there are many people who can look at pornographic websites and never develop any problem with their behavior. **They look. They have fun. They move on.**

But then there are those who are not so fortunate. **Are you one of these people?** Here is what we know about the teens that are **most likely** to become addicted to online pornography:

- 1) Teens who are feeling isolated and rejected at school, especially by the opposite sex.
- 2) Teens that have had difficulty developing age appropriate sexual relationships.
- 3) Teens that experience depression (sadness, dark days, pessimism, lack of joy).
- 4) Teens that experience problems making and keeping friends (especially beginning in elementary school).
- 5) Teens that have family members (parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc.) that have had problems with compulsive and addictive behavior: ***alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, overeating, shopping, and, of course, pornography addiction.***

Many teens believe they will not develop problems with addiction, whether it be drugs, alcohol, or sex. Most teens think they can handle exploring behaviors, taking risks, enjoying exciting and stimulating activities that may be considered a little bit dangerous, without having any problems in their everyday life. And, in many instances, this is true.

The problem with addiction is our vulnerability to becoming addicted is very much determined by factors that we cannot determine until it's too late. For example, if we have a biological or “genetic predisposition” to addiction (based on our family member’s problems with addiction) **it is possible that one, simple, exposure to a pornographic image could trigger addiction.**

Try to think about the risk of developing addiction in terms of a wheel that is divided into slices/percentages (5%, 10%, 30%, 75%, etc.). Each slice represents a different percentage or probability of developing cyber porn addiction. When you spin the wheel the first time (“click” of a mouse) you never know where it will land in terms of the probability of wanting more and more and more cyber porn images.

Due to the genetic history of your family and your life experiences, the chances of the wheel “landing” on addiction may be quite small. However, it may very well be the case that the chances of landing on a “large slice” of the wheel are very high. Again, the problem is, **you never know until you spin the wheel** -- and once you are exposed to something that can stimulate your addiction system, **it's too late.**

Cyber porn can cross the line into illegal behavior!

There is another problem with viewing online pornography and that is you can easily wander into illegal behaviors that have severe consequences. To help you understand this risk, let me tell you the story of the client I worked with recently. “Jacob” was a 17-year-old boy living in a nice house in a very safe and secure neighborhood. His parents were successful and he was able to enjoy a good education, fun vacations, and a variety of hobbies (photography and snowboarding). He was a good athlete, playing both club soccer and varsity baseball. He was also a talented artist, and often drew cartoons that he posted on his Facebook page.

Jacob also liked going online, as most teens do, to surf the web for pornography. At first, he just looked at mainstream websites, with pictures and videos of adults. After a while he became bored with these websites – as they showed the same type of image over and over again.

So, Jacob decided to check out new and different websites. With a “click” here and a “click” there, he began to explore images of girls he thought were his age. He enjoyed these images and websites for a while, but again he became bored and thought it would be interesting to look at younger girls engaged in sexual

activity. So, he surfed the Internet and found websites showing girls that seemed to be at the beginning of their teen years.

Jacob became bored with these images and took a ***tragically wrong turn in cyberspace***. He began to look at younger girls, girls who were most likely in elementary school. These images showed naked children engaged in sexual activity. Jacob felt guilty and uncomfortable with these images and deleted them. But after a few days, he found himself looking at the same type of image. He then felt guilty again and deleted the images. This sequence happened over and over: view, guilt, erase, view, guilt, erase.

One night, while Jacob and his family were enjoying a quiet evening, a loud knock was heard at the front door. It was around 10 PM. Jacob's parents were surprised to hear a knock and immediately went to the door. When they opened the door, they were shocked to see officers from the Los Angeles Police Department and agents from the FBI. Jacob and his parents were served with what is referred to as a search warrant (which made it legal for law enforcement to search the house and all of their computers).

Twelve police officers and FBI agents entered the house and told Jacob and his parents they had discovered someone in the house was viewing ***child pornography***. Jacob's parents were shocked and quickly argued no one in their home would ever look at child pornography. The police officers and FBI agents had electronic evidence and went to Jacob's computer and showed he had been viewing and deleting pornographic images of children. ***Jacob was arrested and removed from the house.***

Jacob was charged with very a serious crime: possession of child pornography with "the intent to distribute" pornography -- which means the Los Angeles Police officers and FBI agents believed Jacob was viewing pornography and was going to sell the pornography to make money. They charged Jacob with very serious offenses the consequences of which included going to jail and registering for the rest of his life as what is referred to as a "***sex offender.***"

If Jacob had been convicted of this crime and had been required to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life, he would have had to report he had been convicted of viewing child pornography to employers, schools, and a wide variety of other organizations and institutions. Everyone would have known! He may have been unable to go to college or even get a job.

Fortunately, Jacob's parents were able to hire an attorney as well as an expert in the area of teen use of pornography (which was me) and we were able to convince law enforcement Jacob was a completely typical teenage boy who made a terrible, but understandable, mistake by exploring the world of child pornography. Jacob was asked to give up the use of his laptop for a period of 2 years, could not use a smart phone for a period of two years, was only allowed to use a computer for school work only (no Facebook), and he was required to undergo counseling to help him understand how and why he had moved from surfing the net to looking at child pornography.

The point of this story is Jacob is a regular, every day, "normal" teenage boy. Jacob's story underlines how incredibly dangerous online sex websites can be. One click here and one click there and, before you know it, there can be 12 law enforcement officers at your door with a search warrant and an arrest warrant.

"Sexting" can lead to big trouble!

As I'm sure you know, the practice of "sexting" (sending sexually graphic photos and/or messages via cell or computer) has become very popular with teens and adults. In most cases "sexting" is seen as a kind of flirting, a way of starting a romance, or a way of expressing sexual interest and desire.

The problem with this practice is that if a teen under the age of 18 sends a picture of themselves (or a friend) that is nude or partially nude (or is engaged in any type of sexual activity) **that image can be considered child pornography by law enforcement.** So, even putting aside for a moment the problems of sending a sexual message or image via your cell phone in terms of your privacy and reputation, the much more significant problem is you could actually get arrested for distributing child pornography!

Recently, teenagers have been arrested on child pornography charges and there have been reports of high-school students **losing jobs or college scholarships as a result of being identified in sexually-suggestive pictures that have appeared on the internet.**

Research conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy showed that 20 percent of teens in the United States say they have sent or posted sexually graphic photos or video of themselves.

According to another national study, most teenagers who sent explicit messages said they were sending them to boyfriends or girlfriends, while others said they were sending the pictures in order to get a date or to flirt with someone they had got to know online.

A series of cases across the country have begun to emerge where young people face arrest and prosecution for sending and receiving the sexually explicit messages. Six high-school students in Greensburgh, Pennsylvania were arrested on child pornography charges. Three were girls who took pictures of themselves, and were charged with possessing child pornography. Three were boys from the same school who were found with explicit photos on their mobile phones by police, and were charged with possession of child pornography.

Last year, in Goshen Ohio, a 19-year-old cheerleading coach was convicted of indecency charges after taking a topless photo of herself and a 17-year-old girl. While in Texas, a 13-year-old boy was arrested on child pornography charges in October, after receiving a nude photo of a fellow student on his mobile phone.

The bottom line with “sexting” is it can lead to law enforcement officers coming to your home or school. They could arrest you and they could charge you with a serious crime that includes similar consequences to Jacob’s case. It is hard to believe, but nonetheless true, sexting can result in serious criminal charges that can ruin your life!

What is normal sexual behavior for teens?

With all of this talk of problems using cyber pornography, including possible addiction and legal risks, you may be wondering ***what is normal sexual behavior for a teenager?***

Well, what is normal? Of course, ***every family and every culture is free to determine what type of sexual behaviors are appropriate and reasonable for teens***, but here is a list of what sex educators consider to be typical behaviors.

Sexually explicit conversations with peers (talking dirty/raunchy), using sexual obscenities and jokes (in a good natured manner), flirting, interest in erotica, masturbation, hugging, kissing, holding hands, fondling, and mutual masturbation.

It is also considered normal to have a girlfriend or boyfriend where sexual intercourse is part of the relationship. Some teenagers have one sex partner throughout high school whereas other teens have two or three stable relationships throughout high school that include intercourse (again your family may have very different ideas and values).

How do you know if your sexual behavior is moving into an area that may be dangerous/risky? Well, if you find yourself thinking about sex all day, are having sex with multiple partners, are engaging in sexually aggressive behaviors including aggressive obscenities, sexual graffiti, violating another person's body space, exposing genitals as a joke, or a single event of viewing a person engaged in sex or undressing without their knowledge - ***then you may have a serious problem.***

How do you know if you have crossed the line and are engaging in dangerous and illegal behaviors? Well, if you are making obscene phone calls or sending sexually graphic and **unwanted** text messages, exposing your private parts to strangers, viewing friends or strangers while they are undressing or having sexual activity on a regular basis, touching someone's genitals without permission, making sexually explicit threats, forcing sexual contact another person, and of course, looking at sexual images of children or engaging in sex acts with children – ***then you definitely have a serious problem!***

If you find yourself feeling you have lost control of your sexual interests and, more importantly, your sexual behavior, ***it is of the utmost importance to be honest and open and ask for help.*** Help is available and there are many adults who fully understand how easy it is for normal, typical, regular, teens to get

involved in risky and illegal sexual behavior. The important message here is you need to reach out rather than conceal your behavior.

Do you have a problem with cyber-porn? Please take the Internet Sex Screening Test.

Internet Sex Screening Test (ISST)

Welcome to the Internet Sex Screening Test (ISST). This inventory asks questions about online and offline sexual behavior. Please respond "Yes" to the items which apply to your behavior and "No" to the items which do not apply. We are currently collecting data on this screening test and therefore do not have cut-off scores to indicate whether or not you have a problem with Internet sex. However, once you have completed the test, you will be shown the percentage that others have said "Yes" to the same items you indicated were "Yes" for your life. If you are concerned about your Internet sexual behavior, please seek professional help.

David L. Delmonico, Ph.D., NCC
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To complete the test, answer each question by placing a check in the appropriate yes/no column.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. I have some sexual sites bookmarked.
Yes	No	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. I spend more than 5 hours per week using my computer for sexual pursuits.
Yes	No	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. I have joined sexual sites to gain access to online sexual material.
Yes	No	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. I have purchased sexual products online.
Yes	No	

- Yes No 5. I have searched for sexual material through an Internet search tool.
- Yes No 6. I have spent more money for online sexual material than I planned.
- Yes No 7. Internet sex has sometimes interfered with certain aspects of my life.
- Yes No 8. I have participated in sexually related chats.
- Yes No 9. I have a sexualized username or nickname that I use on the Internet.
- Yes No 10. I have masturbated while on the Internet.
- Yes No 11. I have accessed sexual sites from other computers besides my home.
- Yes No 12. No one knows I use my computer for sexual purposes.
- Yes No 13. I have tried to hide what is on my computer or monitor so others cannot see it.
- Yes No 14. I have stayed up after midnight to access sexual material online.
- Yes No 15. I use the Internet to experiment with different aspects of sexuality (e.g., bondage, homosexuality, anal sex, etc.)
- Yes No 16. I have my own website which contains some sexual material.
- Yes No 17. I have made promises to myself to stop using the Internet for sexual purposes.

- Yes No 18. I sometimes use cybersex as a reward for accomplishing something (e.g., finish a project, stressful day, etc.)
- Yes No 19. When I am unable to access sexual information online, I feel anxious, angry, or disappointed.
- Yes No 20. I have increased the risks I take online (give out name and phone number, meet people offline, etc.)
- Yes No 21. I have punished myself when I use the Internet for sexual purposes (e.g., time-out from computer, cancel Internet subscription, etc.)
- Yes No 22. I have met face to face with someone I met online for romantic purposes.
- Yes No 23. I use sexual humor and innuendo with others while online.
- Yes No 24. I have run across illegal sexual material while on the Internet.
- Yes No 25. I believe I am an Internet sex addict.

General Questions about Sex Addiction

- Yes No 26. I repeatedly attempt to stop certain sexual behaviors and fail.
- Yes No 27. I have continued my sexual behavior despite it having caused me problems.
- Yes No 28. Before my sexual behavior I want it but afterwards I regret it.
- Yes No 29. I have lied often to conceal my sexual behavior.

Yes No

30. I believe I am a sex addict.
Yes No

31. I worry about people finding out about my sexual activities.
Yes No

32. I have made efforts to quit a type of sexual activity and failed.
Yes No

33. I hide some of my sexual behavior from others.
Yes No

34. When I have sex, I feel depressed afterwards.
Yes No

Please indicate gender:

Male Female

Years using the Internet:

How many hours do you spend online per week?

How many hours do you spend online for internet sex per week?

What is your age?

What should you do if you need help?

Now that you have read the above material and answered the questions in the test, you may have decided you have a problem with your sexual behavior, particularly your online sexual behavior. If so, it is very important to reach out for help. Talking about sex under any circumstance with an adult can be very difficult. It is hard to open up to adults about sexual experiences, preferences, fears, and, most of all risk taking behaviors. The expectation for most teens is they will be embarrassed, criticized, and misunderstood when they talk to adults about their sexual life.

These fears and concerns are often, unfortunately, true. The fact is many adults are very uncomfortable talking about sex with teenagers, particularly subjects such as sex addiction or cyber pornography. ***Nonetheless, there are adults who can be very helpful talking about your sexual behavior and possible problems with Internet pornography.***

If you believe your parents might become angry or embarrass you as a result of acknowledging a problem with Internet pornography, you can reach out to another family member who may be more open to this conversation. Alternatively, you can reach out to someone within your school (counselor), church, synagogue, or other community-based organization. ***You can also ask your parents if you can talk to a therapist. In many cases parents feel much more comfortable with having a therapist involved, as it helps them feel supported and educated.***

The key is to try to move beyond fear of punishment and embarrassment and take action so that you can create the kind of support you need to address possible addiction to Internet pornography. No one can be of help to you if you hide your Internet behavior. It is important to remember compulsive and addictive types of behavior related to Internet pornography is becoming more and more common and, therefore, there are many people who understand this

problem and are open to offering support. Although you may feel embarrassed and ashamed, if you have a problem with Internet pornography, ***you are not alone and there are many other teens and adults who are struggling to figure out how to get unplugged from Internet pornography.***

It will be tempting to conceal your problem and even more tempting to convince yourself you don't have a problem or the problem will go away in its own.

Unfortunately, the more time you spend online using pornography, the more difficult it will be to find a solution to this behavior. ***Try to remember the more you experience the high/pleasure produced by online pornography, the more your brain will crave these images and want to find images that are more exciting, more risky, and unfortunately more destructive to you psychologically, physically, and potentially cause legal consequences.***

Signs and symptoms of Internet addiction or computer addiction

Signs and symptoms of Internet addiction vary from person to person. For example, there are no set hours per day or number of messages sent that indicate Internet addiction. But here are some general warning signs that your Internet use may have become a problem:

- **Losing track of time online.** Do you frequently find yourself on the Internet longer than you intended? Do a few minutes turn in to a few hours? Do you get irritated or cranky if your online time is interrupted?
- **Having trouble completing tasks at school or home.** Do you find yourself putting time on the internet or gaming before all of your chores and school work? Are you online through the middle of the night? Are often tired as a result of being online?
- **Isolation from family and friends.** Is your social life suffering because of the time you spend online? Are you neglecting your family and friends? Do you prefer online friends to offline friends? Or, perhaps you don't feel you have friends at school and have given up on your offline life?
- **Feeling guilty or defensive about your Internet use.** Do you hide your Internet use or lie to your friends and family about the amount of time you spend on the computer and what you do while online?
- **Feeling a sense of euphoria while involved in Internet activities.** Do you use the Internet as an outlet when stressed, sad, or for sexual excitement?

Have you tried to limit your Internet time but failed? Is the internet your favorite activity?

Physical symptoms of Internet addiction

Internet or computer addiction can also cause physical discomfort such as:

- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (pain and numbness in hands and wrists)
- Dry eyes or strained vision
- Back aches and neck aches; severe headaches
- Sleep disturbances
- Weight gain or weight loss

For more information call:

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