

## TTY-L, LOL, BRB...

### Are YOU Addicted to the Internet?

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Do you find yourself saying “Just five more minutes!!” when you are on the Internet? Have others commented on the amount of time you spend online? Do you feel moody or on edge when you are off-line?

With the Internet being one of the fastest growing electronic technologies in the world, the term Internet Addiction is a relatively new one. As university students, we have access to ‘lightening quick’ information at our fingertips and programs that are easy to use. Communication tools like MSN, online course work like those on WebCT, social networking sites like Facebook – it seems everything around us revolves around the INTERNET!

Internet addiction is associated with an uncontrollable urge to use the Internet, accompanied by a loss of control and preoccupation with this usage. This compulsive disorder includes excessive gaming, buying online, e-mailing and instant messaging. It also manifests itself through online gambling, pornography, and even role-playing in make-believe games. Those who may be addicted experience cravings, urges, and withdrawal symptoms.

#### What’s the Cause?

- Access to free and unlimited Internet
- Much more unstructured time
- Desire to escape stressors of university life
- Social alienation – feeling alone and seeking connections
- Anonymity - no monitoring or censoring of what is said/done online

Are YOU addicted?

Take the test at  
<http://www.netaddiction.com>

#### What are the FX?

Spending hours online may cause you to lose track of time and neglect your basic necessities such as eating and sleeping. Secrecy and denial about how much time spent online is common, and feelings of irritability can result. As a student, it is easy to procrastinate with distractions such as online gaming and social networking sites like FaceBook. The potential impact of an Internet addiction can be significant as your grades and personal/professional relationships may suffer.

#### Preventing Internet Addiction

##### Tips to consider:

- ❖ Recognize patterns of Internet overuse
- ❖ Identify the underlying problem i.e. what makes you want to get away?
- ❖ Cut down on internet sessions by setting time limits
- ❖ Find healthy alternatives to internet time (e.g. exercising)
- ❖ Spend more time with friends and family
- ❖ Access the resources available to you:

**On Campus:** The Centre for Student Development, MUSC B107

**Community:** Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Service Call: 905-546-3606

Web: [www.myhamilton.ca](http://www.myhamilton.ca)>Public Health and Social Services>Topics AtoZ>Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling

**Internet:** <http://www.camh.net> (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)

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#### References:

*American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, 402-415 (2004) Internet Addiction: A New Clinical Phenomenon and Its Consequences