The hazards of excessive screen time: Impacts on physical health, mental health, and overall well-being

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Abstract:

Excessive screen time is a growing concern in modern society, with the proliferation of digital devices contributing to increased sedentary behavior and potential hazards to physical health, mental health, and overall well-being. This article explores the potential health and mood deterioration caused by excess screen time. In particular, the article examines how excessive screen time can affect physical health, mental health, and overall well-being. The physical hazards of excess screen time include eye strain, neck and shoulder pain, and back pain. Mental health hazards include increased levels of depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders. Overall well-being can also be impacted by excessive screen time, particularly when it comes to social relationships and cognitive development. The article concludes by recommending the limitation of screen time, particularly for young people, and the incorporation of physical activity and face-to-face interaction into daily routines.

Keywords:

Excessive screen time, hazards, mental health, physical health, well-being

Introduction

Excessive screen time has become a ubiquitous part of modern life, with individuals of all ages spending increasing amounts of time in front of digital devices. While there are undoubtedly benefits to technology use, such as increased productivity, enhanced communication, and access to information, there are also numerous hazards associated with prolonged screen time. This article will explore the potential health and mood deterioration caused by excess screen time and encourage individuals to take a break from digital devices and engage in activities that promote physical activity and face-to face interaction. Addressing the hazards of excessive screen time is the use of "digital detox" programs. Firth *et al.*[1] conducted a study, which showed that digital detox programs can improve mental health outcomes, such as reduced stress and anxiety, and may also lead to improved physical health outcomes, such as weight loss and improved sleep. These programs may offer a unique solution for those struggling to reduce their screen time and improve their overall well-being. In particular, we will examine how excessive screen time can affect physical health, mental health, and overall well-being.

Physical Health Hazards

The physical hazards of excess screen time are numerous, with the most common being eye strain, neck and shoulder pain, and back pain. Eye strain, also known as computer vision syndrome, is a common condition caused by prolonged exposure to computer screens, smartphones, and other digital devices.[2] The symptoms of computer vision syndrome include eye strain, headaches, blurred vision, dry eyes, and neck and shoulder pain. Prolonged screen time can also cause neck and shoulder pain due to

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the poor posture adopted while using digital devices. This poor posture, coupled with the sedentary nature of screen time, can also lead to back pain and other musculoskeletal problems.

Mental Health Hazards

Excessive screen time can have a detrimental effect on mental health, particularly among young people. Research has shown a correlation between increased screen time and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.[3] One study found that adolescents who spend more than five hours per day on digital devices are 70% more likely to have suicidal thoughts or actions than those who spend less than an hour a day.[3] Additionally, excessive screen time can impact sleep, leading to sleep deprivation, which has been linked to depression and other mood disorders.

Overall Well-Being

Excessive screen time can also impact overall well-being, particularly when it comes to social relationships and cognitive development. Screen time can limit opportunities for face-to-face interaction, which can lead to social isolation and loneliness. It can also interfere with cognitive development, particularly among young people. Excessive screen time can reduce attention span, decrease creativity, and limit problem-solving abilities. In extreme cases, excessive screen time can even lead to addiction, such as Internet gaming disorder, which is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to play video games.[4]

Conclusion

Excessive screen time can have significant negative impacts on both physical health and mental health. The sedentary nature of screen time can lead to eye strain, neck and shoulder pain, and back pain, while excessive screen time can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders. The hazards of excessive screen time pose a significant challenge for public health policy makers. The evidence presented in this article highlights the need for policies that promote healthy technology use and limit screen time, particularly for young people. Health policy makers can play an important role in raising awareness of the negative impacts of excessive screen time on physical health, mental health,

and overall well-being and in implementing measures to address these issues. This may include initiatives such as promoting physical activity and outdoor play, encouraging families to set limits on screen time, and supporting schools and workplaces to develop policies that promote healthy technology use. By taking action to alleviate the hazards of excessive screen time, health policy makers can help ensure that individuals can reap the benefits of technology use while protecting their health and well-being. It can also impact cognitive development and overall well-being. To mitigate these hazards, it is recommended to limit screen time, particularly for young people, and to incorporate physical activity and face-to-face interaction into daily routines.[5,6]

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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