

# *Is my Relationship with the Internet Healthy?*



## **What factors put an older adult at risk of internet addiction?**

In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2019, it was learned that 19% of adults age 50–64 years of age and 7% of adults 65 and older are thought to be using the internet in a problematic way.



## Likes and Zings

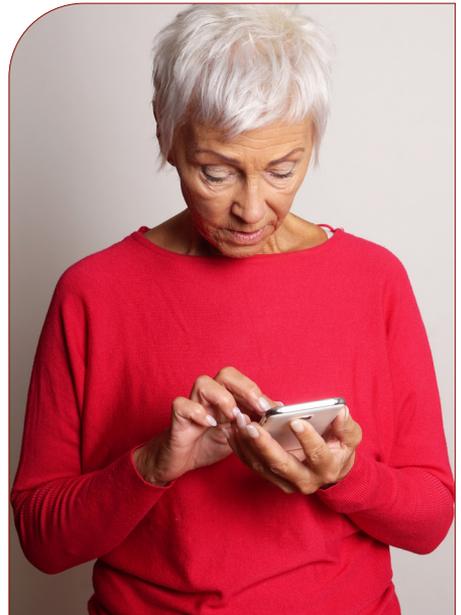
Have you noticed that you get a little zing when someone “likes” your picture on Facebook. Do you find yourself getting a similar charge playing “harmless” poker games on-line? Harmless, that is, until you notice the stack of dishes in your sink or hear your grandchildren complain that they hardly see you anymore, not even on Zoom. That “zing” is the reward center in your brain getting a boost. Continuing to engage in activities that reinforce that boost may lead to problems.

### **Many of us have come to view the internet as a mixed blessing.**

On one hand, we are grateful we can video chat with family and friends when we can't be together in person. On the other hand, we may be finding ourselves spending so much time on-line that we lose opportunities to go on walks, read books, or engage with the few people with whom we can safely visit. What might be occupying our time? For many older adults, social media, gaming activities, or internet gambling may be frequent on-line activities.

### **What factors put an older adult at risk of internet addiction?**

We know that males, in general, are more likely to develop a habit of overusing the internet to play video games, but women are at higher risk of developing an internet gambling issue. Less defined losses, such as loneliness, social isolation, and a lower fixed income can put an older adult at risk.





## **How do we know if internet use is a problem? Consider these:**

1. When a particular activity eclipses the importance of all other activities. “You used to love playing Canasta with our neighbors, why don’t you want to play anymore?”
2. Increased engagement in an activity over time to experience the desired effect or “boost.” “I only got 17 likes on social media post today. Last week I got 35.”
3. Feeling unpleasant mental effects like irritability, insomnia, or depression when not engaging in the activity
4. Struggling with yourself or others about the amount or type of your on-line activities. “The kids are always nagging me to get off my phone.”
5. Effects of both physical inactivity (weight gain, joint stiffness) and overuse issues (neck and shoulder pain, screen-related vision changes).
6. Social-emotional impacts: Loneliness and suicidal thinking seem to be related to increased time online.

## **So, how much is too much?**

For each individual, the picture will look slightly different, but the primary thing to consider is whether your on-line activity keeps you from engaging with the people and things that you love.

## How can CJE SeniorLife help?

We can refer you to the following CJE Senior Life supportive resources:

**Consumer Assistance**—We are resource specialists available to help you identify and apply for the broadest possible range of benefits and support services available. We can help you find the best Medicare prescription drug coverage plan for you.

**CJE Care Management**—We make assessments, develop Care Plans and refer clients to free and low-cost services. Must meet financial eligibility.

**Your Eldercare Consultants**—We work collaboratively with physicians, develop Care Plans, coordinate home care, guide families and find practical resources that support independence. Ongoing services are fee-based.

**Counseling Services**—Our highly-skilled Licensed Clinical Social Workers are specialists in the field of mental health services for seniors. We offer individual, family and group psychotherapy, as well as support groups.

**Community Engagement**—We provide education—geared toward your unique group—on well-being, emergency planning, physical, mental and financial health and many other subject areas.

**JCFS Chicago's Addiction Services** supports individuals and families struggling in or with recovery and work with the Jewish community to create compassionate responses to the challenges posed by internet addiction. [www.jcfs.org](http://www.jcfs.org)

**To find out more about our many services and programs, Call CJE SeniorLife at 773.508.1000.**

THE CJE ADVANTAGE: Our broad continuum of care offers people of all ages, faiths and incomes access to life-enriching opportunities, resources and healthcare. Our Jewish values make us the provider of choice for enhancing lives and navigating the positive aging process.

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CJE SeniorLife® is a partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community.

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