

FACTSHEET:

SMARTPHONE USE



Smartphones have become an essential tool for many people. Our phones serve as our personal navigation system, our way to connect with friends and family members, our banks, our source of entertainment, and many other tools. We check our phones a lot – it’s estimated that Canadian smartphone owners check or use their phone every 10 minutes. For many users, that means they’re checking their phones over 100 times per day. But what happens when we start checking them too much? This factsheet will discuss considerations for smartphone use, the signs of problematic use and will provide some tips and tricks for regaining control.

Cellphones have tons of features designed to keep us hooked. Some to consider are:

- Notifications for everything
- Bright, flashy colours
- Sounds and haptics
- Infinite scrolling
- Always producing new content, software, apps, devices
- Leveraging our desire for social connection
- Providing constant accessibility and instant gratification
- Creating feelings of FoMO (fear of missing out)

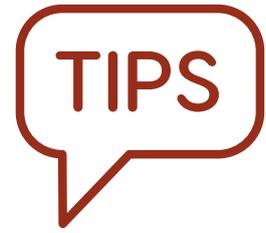
What are the warning signs of excessive smartphone use?

- Preoccupation with technology
- Negative impacts in other areas of your life (relationships, work, home, school)
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities (hobbies, sports, music, etc.)
- Withdrawal symptoms when cellphone or network is unreachable (boredom, anxiety, irritability, troubles with sleep, etc.)
- Using it to cope with difficult emotions/situations
- Previous attempts to reduce have been unsuccessful
- Difficulties completing other tasks or responsibilities
- Significant reduction in face-to-face interactions
- Hiding your smartphone use
- Experiencing the fear of missing out when you cannot check your phone
- Spending excessive amounts of time on your cellphone
- Physical symptoms (eye strain, neck/back problems, headaches, troubles with sleep, etc.)

If you identify with some of these signs it doesn't necessarily indicate an addiction, but it is a good sign to modify your use and put some more limits in place.

If you have concerns or questions, you can always seek additional support!

Tips and Tricks for Regaining Control



- Monitor your habits
 - When do you use your cellphone most?
 - How are you feeling when you use it?
 - Do you use it most when you're feeling lonely/sad/bored/stressed?
 - How do you feel after you use it?
- Set goals for your cellphone use
 - How many hours per day would you like to limit your use to?
 - Determine hours in the day where use is permitted / not permitted
 - Only use technology when other responsibilities are completed
 - Not using in certain areas of the house or during meals
- Have designated technology-free times throughout the day. Create boundaries around your use and availability.
- Try not to use your phone for at least 30 minutes after you wake up. Turn your phone off at least 1 hour before bedtime
- Don't bring technology into the bedroom or bathrooms. If you use your phone as an alarm, move it away from your bed or purchase an alarm instead
- Charge your phone outside of your bedroom, establish a charging area
- Disable non-human notifications – anything that isn't a human trying to talk to you
- Consider removing social media apps and games from your phone entirely

Tips and Tricks for Regaining Control

- Incorporate other activities and hobbies into your routine. This may require a few activities to fit the needs that technology did. Consider what you like about using your smartphone and look for activities that align
- Limit how often you check your phone. If you check it every 10 minutes, challenge yourself to 15 minutes and gradually increase it when goals are achieved. There are apps that can help!
- Challenge yourself to participate in a smartphone detox
- Have your most often used apps set on time out when you want to go offline. Most phones have screen time apps already installed that you can use for this, or you can explore other apps like the ones listed below
- Turn off unnecessary features like YouTube auto-play, these features are designed to keep you engaged
- Consider turning your phone settings to black and white, studies have shown this is effective to reduce screen time

Don't try to take on all these suggestions at once! Start with 1 or 2 and gradually introduce more as you achieve your goals. Remember, new habits take time and effort to develop! The more you practice, the more natural these habits will become.

App Recommendations



Screen Time

This app is built into your phone and allows you to set daily limits on your phone or specific apps



Forest

This app does have a fee (\$5.49 CAD). It helps you stay off other applications by eliminating distractions and planting real trees each time you complete a task without leaving the app. It also allows you to unlock more types of trees as you progress. You can connect with friends, compete with other users, track your progress and more.



Flora

This app is free but does offer in-app purchases. Flora blocks distracting apps and helps you focus by planting real trees when you stay on task. It also allows you to unlock new trees as you progress. You can connect with friends to increase the number of trees being planted, create to-do lists, track your habits and more.



Flipd

This app locks away distracting apps to allow you to focus and has features to connect with others for accountability

Gaming and Gambling Awareness Program (G-GAP)

The Métis Nation of Ontario's G-GAP is designed to raise awareness and assist with the prevention of problem gambling and gaming. The G-GAP provides education on problem gaming/gambling risks and works to reduce the stigma associated with these topics. Our specialized staff host culture-based workshops, trainings and are able to provide assessments and referrals.

What does the program offer?

- Awareness and Prevention Workshops and Presentations
- Connects with broader community supports and services
- Access to information about gaming/gambling
- Online tools and resources
- Staff and community engagement
- Gaming/Gambling Addiction Counselling
- Treatment referrals for problem gaming/gambling
- Networking and partnership development opportunities

For more information or to access confidential support, please contact our Gaming and Gambling Health Promotion Specialist at ggap@metisnation.org, 613-340-2714, or through our website metisgaming.org

Work Cited

- Cibc. (2018, December 25). *CIBC poll: Checked your smartphone recently? Canadian smartphone owners say they check their mobile device every 10 minutes on average*. CIBC Poll: Checked your smartphone recently? Canadian smartphone owners say they check their mobile device every 10 minutes on average. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cibc-poll-checked-your-smartphone-recently-canadian-smartphone-owners-say-they-check-their-mobile-device-every-10-minutes-on-average-513665311.html>
- Cell phone addiction: What you need to know*. verizon.com. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.verizon.com/articles/cell-phone-addiction/#:~:text=There%20are%20other%20negative%20effects,stress%20and%20low%20emotional%20stability>
- Firestone, L. (2017, March 2). *Understanding cell phone addiction*. PsychAlive. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from <https://www.psychalive.org/cell-phone-addiction/>
- Gomez, S. (2021, December 17). *Phone addiction: Warning signs and treatment*. Addiction Center. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from <https://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/phone-addiction/>
- Shoukat S. (2019). Cell phone addiction and psychological and physiological health in adolescents. *EXCLI journal*, 18, 47–50.