

What you need to know about Problematic Interactive Media Use (PIMU)



Center on Media
and Child Health
ASK THE MEDIATRICIAN

How children and teens think about and understand problematic or obsessive media use (also known as Internet or media addiction) is important to developing healthy routines and identifying problems now and into the future. This tip sheet will help you understand how media use behaviors can be problematic and negatively affect health. Use this information as a guide to help you choose and monitor media use in ways that are best for your child.

What do we mean by media?

TV	Internet	Music
Movies	Social Media	Books
Videos	Video Games	Apps

Media use facts

- PIMU most commonly occurs with obsessive use of video games, social media, pornography, and online information-seeking.
- While one of the most common symptoms of PIMU is a fixation with screen media, other symptoms include poor personal hygiene, a decrease in school performance, relationship conflicts, and social withdrawal.
- Children and teens suffering from PIMU may also suffer from other conditions, such as ADHD, social anxiety, depression, or substance use.

What you can do for your children and teens

- Watch for warning signs, such as spending time with screens for long periods, lying or hiding about the amount of time spent, or using media to escape from other issues such as anxiety and depression.
- Create rules for healthy media use, such as time limits. Make sure that children are using media for a specific purpose (such as homework or watching a movie), and not in place of other activities or to avoid dealing with problems.
- If you notice your child displaying signs of PIMU, be sure to talk to them about their media use and seek outside help from a doctor or professional counselor, or contact our experts at the CIMAID clinic (<http://cmch.tv/CIMAID>) for more information and resources.

Remember

Media are not the problem—it is how we use them that results in help or harm. Mindful and focused media use can be healthy for children and teens.

