

# MOBILE MENTAL WELLNESS

## HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell's breakthrough changed the way we interact with each other and the world around us. That evolution continues today. It's hard to believe that the touch-tone, push-button phones of the 1960s led to the digital keypads we text with today. The move from being tethered to a home base to a wireless mobile phone allows for constant interaction and communication. Today, cell phones are used for so much more than a simple phone call. We rely fully on these devices to perform many of the tasks in our daily lives. As our need to continually be connected has increased, so has the psychological and moral implications. So, how much is too much?



With over 30 million mobile subscribers, and 83% of subscribers using smartphones, Canada's smartphone use has become a big piece of our culture. The statistics vary depending on the device used; however, research states that the average Canadian spends approximately 2 hours on mobile devices. Millennials spend an average of 3.2 hours on mobile devices per day – equivalent to a whole day by the end of the week.

## WHO'S IN CONTROL – YOU OR YOUR DEVICE?

We have become slaves to the devices we thought would be tools for managing our time more efficiently, freeing up time to spend with those we love or to perhaps participate in activities we enjoy. Instead, our lives are ruled by ringtones and notifications that remind us of our constant connection and the need to view and respond immediately to demands. While many of us can self-regulate and control our impulses in other areas of our lives, the need to stay connected can lead to excessive phone use, and with each ring or chime comes a stronger urge to act. This desire to respond activates a dopamine response in the brain, much like in Pavlov's dogs.

## HOW MUCH USE IS TOO MUCH USE?

It's a difficult and personal measurement! Research into smartphone use is a fairly new area of development and long-term data has yet to be seen. The **Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS)** is used by professionals to assess smartphone addiction by looking at 6 factors: daily life disturbance, positive anticipation, withdrawal, internet-oriented relationship, overuse, and tolerance. Excessive smartphone use has been linked to anxiety, lack of sleep, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and relationship problems.



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## HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

### SELF-ASSESS YOUR USE

1. Do you find yourself spending more time on your cellphone than you realize?
2. Do you find yourself spending more time communicating via text, social media, or email as opposed to talking to people in person?
3. Do you sleep with your cellphone close by?
4. Does the use of your phone decrease your productivity?
5. Do you have anxiety if you are without your phone for even a short period of time?
6. When you hear a notification do you feel an intense urge to respond?

Your cellphone could be a danger to your health!

Be aware of your activity.

### Manage your device and improve the quality of your life!

**Limit your notifications.** The fewer notifications you receive, the less likely you will have the urge to pick up your phone. You'll be retraining your brain's neurotransmitters to respond to every ring, ding, and chime. Be patient with yourself. Change takes time.

**Set boundaries on use.** Set guidelines on phone usage to prevent the phone from interrupting your personal life and relationships. Consider restricting phone use at the dinner table, in the bedroom, and during recreational time. Encourage face-to-face communication when possible. You'll be setting a positive example for those around you!

**Delete unnecessary apps.** Do you need to be on EVERY social media platform? Today, checking social media is becoming a natural reflex. Delete all social media apps and choose to use them only on a laptop or desktop computer. Does that feel uncomfortable? Perhaps you can choose the platform you use most to communicate with friends and commit to specific times and limits to check, browse, or respond. Don't get caught in the rabbit hole!

**Turn it off before bed.** Better yet, remove the phone from the bedroom completely. Not only will you sleep better, but you will limit your exposure to harmful EMFs (Electromagnetic Fields). Sleep soundly.

Sources: <https://www.statista.com/topics/3529/mobile-usage-in-canada/>  
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