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The Negative Effects of Videogames on Human Health

In today's society there are many different types of video games. There are everything from the old Plug & Play to Xbox 360s and now Virtual Reality Simulators (VR). Video games are growing more and more popular each year and people are playing them longer and longer. Even though gaming has evolved and gotten better, not all of the health problems with video games have. There are many negative physical, mental, and social issues caused by video games. All of these affect the gamers and the gamer's family.

In a study, it states that adolescence play around 10-15 on video games and other electronics (Lutz 2016). In an article by Daphne Bavelier and C. Shawn Green, "There are millions of individual games, hundreds of distinct genres and subgenres, and they can be played on computers, consoles, hand-held devices and cell phones (Bavelier and Green 2011). The amount of games and gaming devices have increased dramatically in the last ten years. Most gamers play on consoles and computer systems. These systems require being a medium to close distance from the screen or monitor meaning there is an increased risk for health problems. There are over 6,100 Gamestop stores around the world. This is a huge number of games available to the public. There are different genres of video games such as casual and educational to fighting and strategy. Some of the most played genres are action and strategy (Lutz 2016). Since there is such a large group of choices this draws in a lot of people and really opens up the gaming world

to new markets and players. Gamers can start having gaming effects as soon as they start playing. Some of these issues can start out as minor nuisances but will grow into big problems as the gaming increases.

Avid gamers play video games the most but the average player plays just as much. This means there is a lot of room for health problems to occur while playing games. There are many different effects that videogames have on a person's body. Video games have bad effects on health, such as obesity, video-induced seizures, postural, muscular and skeletal disorders which cause tendonitis, nerve compression, and carpal tunnel syndrome (Raise Smart 2015). These are all very serious effects on health. Today's society puts a huge emphasis on health and safety but health effects from gaming go unchanged. The government has put laws in place that make school lunches healthier, so what is stopping them from making laws preventing video games from harming the future of the world? Young adolescents with health problems like tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome are going to suffer for the rest of their lives because of these harmful games. They won't be able to work to their full potential and they could have even more health problems that build off of their already existing ones. In an article from LiveStrong.com, "Children who spend more than two hours a day in front of a television or video games in lieu of participating in physical activity may suffer from childhood obesity" (Drea 2015). This is an amazing statistic. Many people nowadays spend over 2 hours at least sitting and watching tv and it is very easy to get lost in a game, look at the clock, and notice that 2-3 hours have gone by even though you may have only done a few missions or quests. This statistic isn't only limited to children, it can be stretched to include adults because of a slower metabolism from ageing. Video games can also have effects on the sight and hearing of an individual. If you have a small room

and you sit very close to your television or computer screen you run a risk of straining your eyes and causing damage to your eyes. This kind of damage can lead to myopia (near sighted) or hyperopia (far sighted). Without treatment for these eye problems they will always worsen. Players that wear headphones or gaming headsets can also cause hearing problems if the volume coming through is too loud for their ear drums. Action and shooting style games have a lot of noise associated with them and will cause harm if the volume is at an extreme. Even though the physical effects that gaming can have on someone are horrendous, these aren't even the worst yet.

On the other side of the spectrum, the mental effects of playing video games are the worst of them all. Mental and psychological effects include, hostility, anxiety, aggressive thoughts and behaviors, empathy toward others such as family and friends, effects of physiological responses like heart rate, blood pressure, and hormones. Prosocial behavior, catharsis, addiction and game dependency, and gender stereotyping are among the list as well (Lee, Kwan M., and Wei Peng 2006). These effects are the worst of the worst. Mental effects can change a person from whom they use to be before gaming. People who play video games feel all of these effects at sometime during their gaming career. There have been countless reports about children, yes children, killing their parents or another parent like figure over video games. These cases were traced back to a form of gaming addiction and an over playing of violent video games. A lot of people have played a game that they have become addicted to but never noticed it. For example, Candy Crush and Flappy Bird were among two of the most popular games in the world. People became so addicted to the games that they started to change who they were on the inside and how they acted towards the people around them. Candy Crush is still very popular today and many people are

still addicted to playing it. Video game addiction is the worst of them all but there are smaller effects that have just as big of an effect on someone. Everyone has watched a movie or show where their heart started pounding and their hands got sweaty and they felt a feeling of anxiety. These are all mental effects that can happen while playing video games. Gamers spend hours upon hours getting in depth with the role of the character in the story or in their online persona. Sometimes that persona carries itself off of the screen and into the gamer's life in forms of aggression, anxiety, and depression. Michael M. Merzenich says, "exposure to fast action games, on a play level that applies to the average regular gamer, has been shown to contribute to an increase in ADHD-related behaviours" (Merzenich 2011). ADHD behaviors can have serious lifelong effects and this can be traced back to video games. Video games mess with the well being of anyone who plays them and can affect them for a lifetime.

Even though there are negative effects to video games, video games have some positive and beneficial effects. Some of these benefits are following instructions, problem solving and logic, hand-eye coordination, fine motor and spatial skills, planning, resource management and logistics, multitasking, simultaneous tracking of many shifting variables and managing multiple objectives (Raise Smart 2015). Many parents allow their children to play video games because they see them as educational and a building tool for young minds. This is true, many games do increase hand-eye coordination abilities and reflexes which are necessary for outdoor activities like athletics. Some educational video games help to advance and strengthen a child's mind and mental state. They can be used in training situations to help improve the ability of the trainee as well as provide instructions on how to perform different task. Some simulation games can educate gamers in field that they might know much about such as agriculture or construction.

Even though video games can be good for a person's health the negative effects of video games far outweigh the positive.

In all videogames are a an essential part of society today and will be a round for a long period of time to come. Video games will only advance and become better and better as years progress. This means that rising health problems will also become more of an issue. This means parents and friends of gamers need to be observant of possible health issue and changes in social behavior. Video games will cause damage to a person's body after enough time, this is a fact, but make sure that you can help to fix the mental, social, and physical problems associated with games. For many people video games are a part of who they are and that's great but there are better thing to do besides sitting on your couch or desk chair playing the latest video game and trying to rack up the biggest score. Video games will harm you and the only way to make sure that you are not effected is to be wise about how you play and when you play.

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