

## Internet use could lower risk of dementia

8th May 2023



There is a plethora of research on the potential harm of the Internet. However, new research suggests that spending time online could be good for the mental health of older people. A study conducted by researchers from New

York University found that regular Internet use could reduce the risk of dementia in those over 50. Study co-author Dr Virginia Chang explained why there could be a link between being online and better mental health. She wrote: "Online engagement may help to develop and maintain cognitive reserve, which can in turn compensate for brain aging and reduce the risk of dementia." The study concluded that "regularly using the internet may be associated with cognitive longevity".

Researchers analyzed data from an American health and retirement study. This research involved questioning 18,154 adults over the age of 50 every two years for 16 years. All of the participants were dementia-free at the start of the research. Everyone was asked about their physical and mental wellbeing, and about how long they spent interacting with the Internet. The researchers discovered that those who used the Internet for up to two hours a day were half as likely to be diagnosed with having signs of dementia than those who were never online. The research also found that excessive Internet use (of 6 to 8 hours a day) may exacerbate the risks of developing dementia.

Sources: [gizmodo.com](http://gizmodo.com) / [cnn.com](http://cnn.com) / [nypost.com](http://nypost.com)

### Writing

People should not use the Internet for over two hours a day. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

plethora / research / Internet / dementia / mental health / cognitive / longevity / risk / data / adults / retirement / age / questioning / physical / mental / signs / half / likely

### True / False

- 1) The article says there is a dearth of research on Internet harm. T / F
- 2) Being online could be good for the mental health of older people. T / F
- 3) Being online could offset the effects of the aging of the brain. T / F
- 4) A study said being online could help us be more intelligent. T / F
- 5) Over 18,500 participants took part in a study. T / F
- 6) The research looked at 16 years' worth of data. T / F
- 7) Two hours of Internet use could halve the onset of dementia. T / F
- 8) Being online for six hours reduces the risk of getting dementia. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. <b>plethora</b>    | a. statistics    |
| 2. <b>conducted</b>   | b. connected     |
| 3. <b>risk</b>        | c. carried out   |
| 4. <b>engagement</b>  | d. immoderate    |
| 5. <b>associated</b>  | e. identified    |
| 6. <b>data</b>        | f. participation |
| 7. <b>wellbeing</b>   | g. abundance     |
| 8. <b>diagnosed</b>   | h. make worse    |
| 9. <b>excessive</b>   | i. good health   |
| 10. <b>exacerbate</b> | j. likelihood    |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How would your life be different without the Internet?
- c) How has the Internet changed the world?
- d) How does the Internet affect your wellbeing?
- e) How long should people be online for each day?
- f) What did you use the Internet for yesterday?
- g) What's the future of the Internet?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. There is a plethora                    | a. mental health          |
| 2. dementia in those                      | b. the risk of dementia   |
| 3. a link between being online and better | c. signs of dementia      |
| 4. compensate for brain aging and reduce  | d. longevity              |
| 5. be associated with cognitive           | e. mental wellbeing       |
| 6. All of the participants were dementia- | f. over 50                |
| 7. asked about their physical and         | g. of developing dementia |
| 8. diagnosed with having                  | h. free at the start      |
| 9. excessive Internet                     | i. of research            |
| 10. exacerbate the risks                  | j. use                    |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of the Internet?
- What's the harm of spending too long online?
- How might the Internet be bad for our mental health?
- How important is the Internet to you?
- What do you know about dementia?
- How can we keep dementia at bay?
- What else can we do to prevent the onset of dementia?
- Do you really need the Internet?

## Spelling

- There is a erthlapo of research
- the aetlionpt harm of the Internet
- Study oc-othaur Dr Virginia Chang
- Online mgnanteeg
- sapcetomen for brain aging
- associated with cognitive gvilnteoy
- All of the rspcpnaiatit
- physical and mental eellwngib
- rinenattcgj with the Internet
- aongedids with having signs
- sesvxicee Internet use
- breacaxeet the risks of developing dementia

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. c	3. j	4. f	5. b
6. a	7. i	8. e	9. d	10. h

## Role Play

### Role A – Happiness

You think happiness is best for longevity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a vegetable diet, medicine or exercise.

### Role B – Vegetable Diet

You think a vegetable diet is best for longevity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): happiness, medicine or exercise.

### Role C – Medicine

You think medicine is best for longevity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a vegetable diet, happiness or exercise.

### Role D – Exercise

You think exercise is best for longevity. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a vegetable diet, medicine or happiness.

## Speaking – Longevity

Rank these with your partner. Put the things that best increase longevity at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| • Medicine | • Happiness      |
| • Exercise | • Vegetable diet |
| • Doctors  | • Friends        |
| • Water    | • Sleep          |

### Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	T	4	F	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.