

[IMAGE]

OMG! Too Much Social Networking and Texting Could Be Dangerous

By Editorial Staff

A startling new study suggests a disturbing association between excessive social networking and texting by teenagers and participation in a wide range of poor health behaviors including cigarette, alcohol and drug use, increased sexual activity and violence. The study defined "hypernetworking" as spending three-plus hours per school day on social network sites such as Facebook, and "hypertexting" as sending in excess of 120 text messages per school day. Teens guilty of hypernetworking (11.5 percent of teens surveyed) were:

- 79% more likely to have tried alcohol
- 69% more likely to be binge drinkers
- 62% more likely to have tried cigarettes
- 84% more likely to have used illicit drugs
- 94% more likely to have been involved in a physical fight
- 69% more likely to have had sex
- 60% more likely to report four or more sexual partners

An even larger percentage of teens (19.8 percent) were guilty of hypertexting and displayed similar patterns of poor health behaviors:

- social networking - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark More than twice as likely to have tried alcohol
- 43% more likely to be binge drinkers
- 40% more likely to have tried cigarettes
- 41% more likely to have used illicit drugs
- 55% more likely to have been involved in a physical fight
- Nearly 3.5 times more likely to have had sex
- 90% more likely to report four or more sexual partners

The study by researchers at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine does not show cause and effect, which means it does not prove that excessive social networking and texting caused these unhealthy behaviors to manifest (or vice versa). That said, the study suggests enough of a potential connection to make parents think twice before allowing their teen unlimited text- messaging capabilities and unsupervised access to the Web.

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