

Internet Proves Important to Teens With Chronic Conditions

November 4 2009, By Glenda Fauntleroy

(PhysOrg.com) -- The Internet has become a popular socializing tool for adolescents and a new study shows those with chronic health conditions might rely on it more heavily than their peers do.

According to the new Swiss study, Internet use among adolescents in the country is similar to other Western regions, with 91 percent of 14 to 19 year olds logging online several times per week. However, researchers wanted to know how important the Internet is in the lives of adolescents with [chronic conditions](#) who are more at risk of being isolated from their [peers](#).

The study, led by Joan-Carles Suris, M.D. of at the University of Lausanne, appears online in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#).

Suris and his colleagues evaluated data from a 2002 Swiss Multicenter Adolescent Survey on Health. In the study, 731 adolescents between 16 and 20 reported having a chronic condition, which the study defined as a disease lasting more than six months and needing regular care or a disability that limits daily activities. The researchers did not provide data on the adolescents' specific conditions.

Adolescents without a chronic condition were part of the control group. All participants answered questions about their time spent on the Internet in the past 30 days as well as which categories of Web sites they visited, such as health, leisure and school related.

Adolescent [girls](#) with chronic conditions were more likely to use the Internet than girls without chronic conditions. Where only about 11 percent of girls with conditions were not using the Internet, 15 percent of their peers were not. Of girls with chronic conditions, 4.9 percent were heavy Internet users — online more than two hours each day — compared with 2 percent of girls without such conditions.

On the other hand, adolescent males with chronic conditions did not have any significant differences in their Internet use than their peers. Suris said the difference between the boys and girls was not that surprising.

“Girls use the Internet for socialization while boys use it for games,” he said. “Overall, whether online or offline, females are more socializing than males.”

The study also found that girls with chronic conditions accessed health-related Web sites more often than their peers do.

“Given the popularity of online medical sites, it stands to reason that those with chronic illnesses would turn to the Web for information, but one must be careful to choose reliable sources when doing so,” said Jeanie Alter, program manager of the Indiana Prevention Resource Center at Indiana University. “Social networking sites also can provide an outlet for socializing that may not be feasible when dealing with a chronic illness.”

More information: Suris JC, et al. Chronically connected? Internet use among [adolescents](#) with chronic conditions. J Adolesc Health online, 2009.

Provided by Health Behavior News Service ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Internet Proves Important to Teens With Chronic Conditions (2009, November 4)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-11-internet-important-teens-chronic-conditions.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.