Smart phone, bad grades?

CMU researchers link excessive phone use with poor academic performance among teens

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If you are like most Americans, you'll spend several hours today looking at your cellphone screen — and there's a good chance it isn't making you any smarter.

In fact, a new Central Michigan University study shows that excessive use of smartphones may actually decrease academic performance among teens and adolescents.

Sarah Domoff, a clinical psychologist at the CMU Center for Children, Families and Communities and faculty member in the psychology department, worked with physical education and sport faculty member Rick Ferkel and graduate student Ryan Foley on a new study examining addictive phone use and academic performance in adolescents.
The study, published in the journal Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, examined the behaviors of more than 600 students in grades seven through 12, including how often students used their phones at school and while doing homework.

Students also answered questions about how they felt when they were not using their phones and whether they felt tense or restless when not using their phones. These questions help clinicians identify addictive phone use, Domoff said.

"Higher addictive phone use scores associated with poorer academic achievement, such as lower grades," Domoff said.
It's not only among teens and tweens — she said previous studies have linked excessive phone use and lower GPA among college students.

Be smart about phone use

A report from Common Sense Media shows more than half of all tweens and teens spend four or more hours a day using screen devices; some use their devices in excess of eight hours a day. It's no wonder nearly half of

U.S. parents worry their children are addicted to their mobile devices, said Domoff.

She suggests parents and children work together to develop a contract for appropriate phone use before the child is given a phone and encourages ongoing conversations about the kind of apps and content the child is using.

Domoff also advises parents to keep a close eye on their children's use of digital devices to see if there is an increase in missing work or poorer performance on tests.

"I recommend that parents consider how their children are performing at school before and after they receive a smartphone," she said.
Parents: If you are concerned about your child's use of digital devices, such as cellphones or social media, help is available at CMU's Center for Children, Families and Communities. Call 989-774-6639.