

## The Worrying Addiction Causing Aussie Kids to 'soil themselves'

It has been claimed around 78,000 Australian children are now addicted to video games. The condition, now officially recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), is having startling mental and physical health implications for both the children and their parents.

"I have seen children not go to school, miss school 50 days a year, 100 days a year," Dr Huu Kim Le, a child and adolescent child psychologist specialising in video game addiction, told Today. "Children who are not eating or drinking. They're not showering. They're staying inside their rooms, not leaving their rooms."

"In some rare cases paediatricians are sending me young children who are actually soiling themselves as they're playing a video game," he added.

Yet, it is often not as simple as just taking the games away, Dr Kim Lee acknowledged.

"It's super complex," he admitted. "So many factors lead to this problem and we have to look at all the information: what's happening in the family?"

"What's happening at school? Maybe the child is being bullied at school and the only social interaction they're getting is in the video game itself."

His recommendations are for parents to try and distance themselves from the emotion and give their children time guidelines. "Repeat yourself and verbally confirm why you're doing what you're doing," he said.

Another way to cope is to give children two options. For example, you could tell your kids they can game for another hour and then tomorrow they don't get any games, or they can stop playing the games now and have an hour tomorrow.

While these methods can help, the doctor admitted that children can often bully their parents into letting them play, sometimes even making physical threats of violence.

"Avoid cutting it off directly in the middle of the game because then the emotions start getting out and that's when sometimes the threats and violence come out," he said. "When physical threats are being made that is a very effective way to control someone."

When addictions reach these types of levels, please call Lifeskills Australia for support on **1800 870 080** or email us at [info@lifeskillsaustralia.com.au](mailto:info@lifeskillsaustralia.com.au) to book a session with one of our clinicians.