

# Quaran-teen: Minds in Covid crisis

20% Case Rise  
Reported By  
Psychiatrists  
In The City

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**Ahmedabad:** Sonali (name changed), 15, was brought to a city-based psychiatrist as she could not concentrate on her online classes. The problem was not simple, of course. After counselling, the experts determined that it was 'withdrawal symptom.' A smartphone given to her for online classes was taken back by her parents as she was spending hours on it, browsing social media sites and video platforms.

While the Covid-19 pandemic affected a large section of the population physically and mentally, the teens were also hit hard, said experts.

Dr Ajay Chauhan, medical superintendent of Government Hospital for Mental Health, said that the rise they have noted in cases is about 20% compared to 2019.

"It could well be the tip of the iceberg, as parents generally bring their wards to us only when the cases get extreme," he said. "The majority of the cases were related to screen addiction, spending excessive time online, extreme mood swings, anger without any apparent trigger, and eating disorders."

Dr Jainidhi Nanavati, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, said that children and teens missed the interaction with their peers the most. "As many spent such a prolonged time with their parents—who were also ho-

## CASE STUDIES ON CORONA IMPACT

### FILMY FIGHTS

The parents of a 16-year-old child from the western part of the city became worried after the child started beating up his siblings and neighbourhood kids 'filmy style.' Experts said that the child was feeling frustrated due to prolonged stay at home and listening to his parents who were working from home. His exposure to clips online turned his frustration into physical manifestation, said experts.



### WHAT'S DEATH?

A 14-year-old boy was affected when he lost his grandfather in the pandemic. The case came to a city-based psychiatrist when the boy started asking existential questions such as what is death and where people go after they die. As he was emotionally attached to the deceased, it also caused an irrational fear of the viral infection. The trauma led to an obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), manifested in frequent washing of hands and anger against those who did not follow rules.

Illustration: Punit Kalawadia

“One of the biggest issues for teens is the lack of an organized day—the boundaries between learning and other activities got blurred. It made some teens explore unhealthy or undesirable content online, causing socio-psychological imbalance



Dr Jinesh Shah | PSYCHIATRIST

“International studies have indicated a rise in screen time for adolescents during the pandemic, and one of the fallouts is high BMI. We have often seen cases of gaming and social media addiction over the past few months

Dr Kevin Patel | PSYCHIATRIST



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led up at home—for the first time, interpersonal issues cropped up,” she said. “Those who witnessed death or illness of their loved ones reported a rise in obsessive compulsive disorders (OCDs).”

The online mode of education affected the attention span of children, said Dr Minakshi Parikh, head of psychiatry department at BJ Medical College. “Many

just logged into class, without actually attending it,” Dr Parikh said. “The impact of prolonged screen time has been well-documented even before the pandemic, but it has been more pronounced over the past few months.”

While the experts are hopeful of a drop in cases with the opening of schools and colleges in a phased manner, they suggested streamlining of the daily routine as the first step towards maintaining psychological well-being.

Several schools made wearing uniform compulsory for online classes due to this reason, they pointed out.

The stay at home blurred the boundaries between personal and professional space, they added.

## MAPPING DISTRESS

- City-based experts said that the pandemic had a lasting impact on children and teens as they for the first time experienced a long period of staying at home
- Lack of peer interaction created pent-up emotions and prompted many to find that connect online. Thus, children and teens of both genders found solace in virtual company
- Increased screen time led to disturbed sleeping patterns and eating disorders. Some teens also took to gaming heavily during the initial months of the pandemic
- Experts pointed to the likely fallout of online education—many could not concentrate on e-classes, which could lead to weaker foundation for some students

## KIDS IN DESPAIR