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**Internet use could lower risk of dementia – 8th May 2023**

## Level 4

Being online could help the mental health of older people. Researchers found that regular Internet use could cut the risk of dementia in over-50s. The study found a link between being online and better mental health. It said being online may help to develop and maintain cognitive abilities, which can "compensate for brain aging and reduce the risk of dementia". Internet use may increase cognitive longevity.

Researchers looked at health and retirement data from 18,000 adults aged over 50. They were all dementia-free at the start of the 16-year research. Everyone was asked every two years about their mental wellbeing and Internet use. Those who were online for two hours a day were half as likely to have signs of dementia. People who used the Internet for 6 to 8 hours a day may increase the risks of getting dementia.

## Level 5

New research suggests that being online could benefit the mental health of older people. Researchers from New York University found that regular Internet use could reduce the risk of dementia in over-50s. The study explained why there could be a link between being online and better mental health. It said: "Online engagement may help to develop and maintain cognitive reserve, which can in turn compensate for brain aging and reduce the risk of dementia....Regularly using the Internet may be associated with cognitive longevity."

Researchers looked at data from a health and retirement study of 18,154 adults over the age of 50. The participants were dementia-free at the start of the 16-year research. Everyone was asked every two years about their mental wellbeing, and about how long they spent online. The researchers found that those who were online for two hours a day were half as likely to have signs of dementia than those who were never online. They also found that excessive Internet use (6 to 8 hours a day) may increase the risks of dementia.

## Level 6

There is a plethora of research on the potential harm of the Internet. However, new research suggests that spending time online could be good for the mental health of older people. A study conducted by researchers from New York University found that regular Internet use could reduce the risk of dementia in those over 50. Study co-author Dr Virginia Chang explained why there could be a link between being online and better mental health. She wrote: "Online engagement may help to develop and maintain cognitive reserve, which can in turn compensate for brain aging and reduce the risk of dementia." The study concluded that "regularly using the internet may be associated with cognitive longevity".

Researchers analyzed data from an American health and retirement study. This research involved questioning 18,154 adults over the age of 50 every two years for 16 years. All of the participants were dementia-free at the start of the research. Everyone was asked about their physical and mental wellbeing, and about how long they spent interacting with the Internet. The researchers discovered that those who used the Internet for up to two hours a day were half as likely to be diagnosed with having signs of dementia than those who were never online. The research also found that excessive Internet use (of 6 to 8 hours a day) may exacerbate the risks of developing dementia.