

Are you an e-mail addict?

[from the HP Technology at Work website](#)



What would be most harmful to your health: no food; no water; or no e-mail? All over the world, people are beginning to wonder why all roads now lead to our inboxes. In less than 20 years e-mail and its off-shoot, instant messaging (IM), have monopolized business communication. Who picks up the phone anymore, or crosses the room to talk with a co-worker (!?!), unless the building is on fire?

Born in 1990, e-mail undoubtedly offers great advantages. Our inboxes record our important conversations, requests and replies. And it is a cheap, quick and convenient way to connect your business or stay in touch with far-flung friends and family.

Mail in moderation

But our growing over reliance on e-mail is leading many people to believe they have an unhealthy dependence. Check these symptoms to see if you could be an e-mail addict:

- You find it hard to focus on a task for longer than 15 minutes without checking your inbox.
- You get nervous if you can't access your e-mail for a few hours.
- You feel lonely if you receive no new mail after your lunch break.
- You scan your inbox first thing in the morning and before going to sleep each night.

From the White House to your house

If you now consider yourself an "emailaholic", you share powerful company. President Obama has recently revealed he is addicted to his handheld e-mail device. From the Oval Office to your office and in thousands between, people are beginning to admit they waste too much time in their inbox.

Why is this bad?

Being obsessed with e-mail actually reduces your productivity if you spend more time waiting for messages than finishing important jobs. Equally, it's unhealthy if you find yourself getting up in the night to find a WiFi spot, or in your free time it stops you from relaxing with friends and family.

Facing your addiction

Here are four tips on how to tackle your addiction.

1. **Set a virtual curfew:** Outside work hours you need to reduce the impact of e-mail on yourself and loved ones. You need downtime and they want to enjoy your company without inbox incursions. If you have to, give yourself one hour when you come home from work to check and then turn-off and chill-out. Try not to get online as soon as you wake up and before sleeping. Even consider having one e-mail-free day per week.
2. **Talk more, type less:** Too often we type mails that raise more questions than they answer. You can actually save yourself time at work by making a quick call to colleagues to avoid unclear e-mail trails.
3. **Write and post a letter:** Once your fingers remember how to handle a pen again you might even enjoy this. Receiving a hand-written letter is special. Share that with a friend or a client and remember there's more to life than the online.
4. **Go cold turkey:** Take a holiday without your laptop. Don't look at your accounts. Not once! You'll be surprised, the world can keep going without you.

Avoid the inbox trap

It might be small, but your inbox can easily become a big time-waster. To lift your productivity and enjoyment away from work try to spend more time thinking outside your inbox.