

# Nomophobia

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## Abstract

Nomophobia is one of the modern pathologies that has been born as a consequence of the impact that portable technologies have had on society and the dependence generated among citizens, especially towards smartphones. This phobia manifests itself and is intensified by the loss of immediate access to information, to the network of contacts, as well as by the impossibility of contacting or being contacted by other people. All this ends up interfering with the development of the person's daily life (physical, physiological, psychological, social problems, among others).

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## I. Introduction

Nomophobia, or “no mobile phone phobia” is when a person experiences fear or anxiety about not having mobile phone connectivity. It can lead to agitation, changes in breathing, and other symptoms. While some people may dislike the idea of going without their phone for prolonged periods, others experience fear or anxiety about losing connectivity from their mobile phone. This is known as nomophobia. Other researchers have expressed similar findings. In a 2016 study, researchers proposed that nomophobia may be less of a specific phobia or anxiety and more of an addiction. They proposed changing the name and making a classification called “smartphone addiction disorder.”

## II. Definition

The term nomophobia is constructed on definitions described in the DSM-IV, it has been labelled as a “phobia for a particular/specific thing”. Various psychological factors are involved when a person overuses the mobile phone, e.g., low self-esteem, extrovert personality. The burden of this problem is now increasing globally. Other mental disorders like, social phobia or social anxiety, and panic disorder may also precipitate nomophobic symptoms. It is very difficult to differentiate whether the patient becomes nomophobic due to mobile phone addiction or existing anxiety disorders manifest as nomophobic symptoms. The signs and symptoms are observed in nomophobia cases include- anxiety, respiratory alterations, trembling, perspiration, agitation, disorientation and tachycardia.

## Etiology

The exact cause of nomophobia is not fully understood. Authors of a 2016 article noted that it developed due to the instant communication and instant gratification that smartphones provide. This can develop the addictive and compulsive behavior. Others believe that an existing anxiety disorder or phobia may lead to the development of nomophobia.

In one 2020 article, researchers proposed that possible causes or predictors included: obsessive thoughts and compulsive behavior related to a smartphone; interpersonal sensitivity, which is the ability to assess the abilities and traits from nonverbal cues in others, and may include: feelings of personal inferiority; social discomfort; the number of hours of smartphone use each day.

## Clinical features

A phobia is a type of anxiety disorder that is characterized by an irrational fear of an object or situation. In this instance, the fear is of being without a phone or being out of the reach of cell phone service. While nomophobia is not a clinical diagnosis, some of the signs that are commonly identified as related to this fear include:

- The inability to turn off your phone

- Constantly checking your phone for missed messages, emails, or calls
- Charging your battery even when your phone is almost fully charged
- Taking your phone with you everywhere you go, even into the bathroom
- Repeatedly checking to make sure that you have your phone
- Fear of being without wifi or being able to connect to a cellular data network
- Worrying about negative things happening and not being able to call for help
- Stress over being disconnected from one's online presence or identity
- Skipping activities or planned events in order to spend time on the mobile device

In addition to emotional and cognitive symptoms, people may also experience physical symptoms as well. People might breathe faster, their heart rate may increase, they may sweat more, and may shake or tremble. They may also begin to feel weak or dizzy. In severe cases, these fear symptoms can escalate into a panic attack.

### Characteristics of nomophobia

In a 2015 study, researchers identified some key dimensions of nomophobia.<sup>3</sup> the fear of being without a phone center on:

- Not being able to communicate with others
- Feeling generally disconnected
- Not being able to access information
- Giving up a convenience

People with this phobia check their phones constantly, take their phones everywhere they go (including the shower and bathroom), spend many hours per day using their phones, and experience feelings of helplessness when they are separated from their phones.

### Management

Since nomophobia is not an officially recognized disorder and is relatively new, no treatments currently exist. Instead, a doctor or psychologist will likely recommend treatment options similar to treating other phobias. the following are some possible options that a doctor may recommend if they suspect someone is living with nomophobia.

### Behavioral therapies

A standard treatment approach for phobias includes a variety of potential behavioral therapies. These therapies help to address the underlying fears and beliefs surrounding the phobia. in the case of nomophobia, the therapies could help address a person's fear of losing their phone, not being connected, and the implications of not having access to their phone. some therapies for phobias include:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy:** in this therapy, a person confronts the underlying thoughts that contribute to the phobia.
- **Desensitization, or exposure therapy:** this approach involves gradually exposing a person to the thing they fear. In nomophobia, a doctor may expose a person to a lack of access to their phone.
- **Hypnotherapy:** hypnotherapy involves a therapist guiding a person through imagery to help them develop self-soothing techniques when confronted with not having access to a phone.

### Support groups

A person may be able to find a support group that helps to address the fear and anxiety associated with not having access to a phone. they may wish to use this website to search for local support groups that help with different topics of interest.

### Medications

A healthcare professional may prescribe medications such as clonazepam and tranylcypromine to help treat trusted source the symptoms of nomophobia, such as anxiety.

### Self-care and practice

A person can practice self-care strategies on their own. They can take the following steps to manage their phobia:

- Learn more about what causes their phobia
- progressive muscle relaxation, which involves focusing on relaxing muscles in groups
- Practicing different therapeutic breathing techniques

One 2021 study found that helping students improve their self-esteem provided effective therapy for nomophobia. a person may also benefit from learning relaxation techniques. This therapy involves a

combination of breathing techniques, exercises, and meditation techniques to help a person cope with not having a phone or other phobias.

### III. Conclusion

Nomophobia refers to a group of symptoms in which a person experiences fear or anxiety regarding the loss of their smartphone or connectivity. It is not officially recognized, but more researchers are petitioning for its inclusion as a type of psychological disorder. Treatments are currently nonstandard and involve the use of medications, behavioral therapies, support groups, and self-care.

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