



# SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

## How Does Social Media Affect Mental Health?



1-4 hours per day of reported social media use by Canadian university students.<sup>1</sup>



90% of university students reported being social media users.<sup>7</sup>



4+ active social media accounts per student, reported on average.<sup>1</sup>

- When assessing social media's impact on your mental health, it is crucial to ask yourself the following question. Does social media evoke positive or negative feelings (i.e., stress, nervousness, etc.)? Why are you using social media? Do you find yourself relying on social media for confidence?
- Despite the plethora of information, outlets for self-expression, and access to communication with people worldwide, whether the impact social media imposes on undergraduate students' health is positive or negative remains unclear. As evidenced by several studies, the link between increased social media use and the risk of developing several mental health disorders has been evidenced by several studies, indicating that the incidence of depression, anxiety, and self-harm/suicidal thoughts is greater amongst avid social media users.<sup>2</sup>

## The Benefits of Social Media

Social media allows many individuals to access platforms that have been evidenced to improve social well-being, mental health, and self-rated health.<sup>3</sup>

Some ways that social media benefits mental health include:

- **Communication & Connectedness**
  - Communication with family and friends and forming new relationships with like-minded individuals worldwide.
- **Activism**
  - Effectively allows for the initiation of mass movement activism (e.g., #METOO, #BlackLives Matter).<sup>4</sup>
- **Self-expression & Creativity**
  - Social media can be a "safety net" for those who may fear expressing themselves in real life.
- **Education**
  - Social media provides easy access to professionally-presented information. Consume educational content from a reputable source.

Social media has great potential for detrimental effects on an individual's mental health.

- **Body Image & Self-esteem**
  - Unrealistic expectations and beauty standards are amplified on social media, which may lead to unhealthy eating & exercise habits.<sup>5</sup>
- **"Feeling of Missing Out" (FOMO) & Social Comparison**
  - Studies show a direct link between social media use & FOMO, resulting from frequent comparisons of a person's life with others' perceived life online.<sup>6</sup>
- **Cyberbullying**
  - 19% of post-secondary students reported experiencing cyberbullying.<sup>7</sup>
- **Misinformation & Misrepresentation**
  - False information, especially related to health, is prevalent online. Always fact-check information!<sup>8</sup>

## The Harms of Social Media

## Tips for Navigating Social Media



Limit your time on social media.

Take breaks from social media use when necessary.



Declutter negative influences & individuals from your feed.

Avoid checking social media right after you wake up or before you go to sleep.



Be conscious of your intentions when posting.

## References

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