

Q.

Is social media bad for your mental health?

A.

If you spend a lot of time on social media, it could have a negative impact on your mood, happiness and mental health.

Think about it like this. When you click, swipe and scroll on social media, just about everybody is smiling and happy. Right?

Based on what you see on social media, it looks like most people take dream vacations and dine on gourmet food. And everybody seems to be flush with fame, fortune, money, success, and good times.

Your life might not have all these things, but it looks like everyone else does. You're missing out. And now you're not happy.¹ Ever felt this way?

The 'Highlight Reel' Effect

If you're a regular social media user, you might think all your friends are living the dream lifestyle. But it isn't true. You're only seeing the "highlight reel," according to a recent study.²

Too much social media time is a recipe for feeling unhappy and depressed, says University of Houston researcher Dr. Mai-Ly Steers.



Can social media make you sad?

"Depressed feelings and lots of time on Facebook and comparing oneself to others tend to go hand in hand."

Are you spending too much time on social media?

Compare your social media use to these trends:

- **3.5 billion** People actively use social media
- **7.6** Average number of social media accounts per person •
- **142** Number of minutes the average adult spends on social media per day
- **10** Number of times per day social media users check accounts

If you're feeling down, depressed, or unhappy, take a break from social media.

Here are some things you can do:

- Try a social-media fast for a few days.
- Cut back on how much time you spend on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and others.

ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

- Or simply call it quits to your click-tap-and-swipe habits for a while.

With all that extra time, you'll need to find other things to do, like:

- Plan a lunch date with friends.
- Go for a walk.
- Read a book.
- Cook a healthy meal.
- Volunteer.
- Spend more time with family and friends.
- Catch up on housework, laundry, grocery shopping, or yard work.

Do something other than staring at a screen comparing yourself to others, and you'll feel happier. And if you still feel sad or depressed after a break from social media, see your doctor.

References

1. Braghieri, L, et al. (2021). Social media and mental health. SSRN, From: <https://tinyurl.com/ycxsv8ev>
2. Steers, M., et al. (2014). Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms. Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 33(8): 701-731. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y4wu644p>