

## Top US doctor wants social media health warnings

20th June 2024



Social media has changed the world. There are good and bad things about it. One bad thing is that it can cause mental health problems. This is something the USA's top doctor wants to address. U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy wants social media companies to

display mental health warnings on their platforms. He is particularly worried about the harm the platforms do to young people. He said algorithms lead youngsters to extreme sexual and violent content. Dr Murthy said: "It is time to require a surgeon general's warning label on social media platforms, stating that social media is associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents." He said laws were also needed to keep young people safe online.

Dr Murthy has campaigned for tighter controls of social media for many years. In 2023, he warned that social media presented, "a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents". His recent warning is in a guest essay published by The New York Times. He wrote: "The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency. Social media has emerged as an important contributor." He has concerns about how long young people spend online. He said youngsters "who spend more than three hours a day on social media face double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms". Murthy thinks online warnings will help, just as warnings on cigarettes have helped.

Sources: [foxbusiness.com](https://www.foxbusiness.com) / [theverge.com](https://www.theverge.com) / [apnews.com](https://www.apnews.com)

## Writing

No one under 16 years of age should be allowed to use social media. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

social media / bad things / mental health / warnings / harm / violent content / laws / controls / risk / children / emergency / concerns / online / depression / cigarettes

## True / False

- 1) The article says there are good and bad things about social media. T / F
- 2) The U.S. Surgeon General gave his address to a social media site. T / F
- 3) The Surgeon General said youngsters are changing algorithms. T / F
- 4) Dr Murthy said only warnings were necessary, not laws. T / F
- 5) Dr Murthy started campaigning for social media controls in 2023. T / F
- 6) Dr Murthy called mental health among youngsters and emergency. T / F
- 7) Youngsters who spend over three hours a day online risk depression. T / F
- 8) Dr Murthy also wants stronger warnings on cigarettes. T / F

## Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. <b>cause</b>      | a. linked      |
| 2. <b>display</b>    | b. appeared    |
| 3. <b>require</b>    | c. stricter    |
| 4. <b>associated</b> | d. stress      |
| 5. <b>safe</b>       | e. bring about |
| 6. <b>tighter</b>    | f. great       |
| 7. <b>profound</b>   | g. cautions    |
| 8. <b>emerged</b>    | h. need        |
| 9. <b>anxiety</b>    | i. show        |
| 10. <b>warnings</b>  | j. secure      |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of social media?
- b) What are the good things about social media?
- c) How does social media affect mental health?
- d) Should there be health warnings on social media platforms?
- e) What do you know about algorithms on social media?
- f) Should people under 16 be allowed to use social media?
- g) What do you think of the social media platforms you use?
- h) What advice do you have for social media websites?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Social media has                          | a. risk of anxiety        |
| 2. it can cause                              | b. safe online            |
| 3. extreme sexual and                        | c. have helped            |
| 4. associated with significant mental health | d. people is an emergency |
| 5. keep young people                         | e. mental health problems |
| 6. a profound risk                           | f. spend online           |
| 7. The mental health crisis among young      | g. violent content        |
| 8. how long young people                     | h. harms for adolescents  |
| 9. face double the                           | i. of harm                |
| 10. warnings on cigarettes                   | j. changed the world      |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What are the bad things about social media?
- What controls are needed on social media?
- Should social media platforms be fined for damaging mental health?
- What is the answer to the mental health emergency?
- How long online is too long?
- How big a problem are anxiety and depression?
- What questions would you like to ask social media bosses?

## Spelling

- it can sacue mental health problems
- something the USA's top doctor wants to rdseads
- alidyasp mental health warnings
- He is alrliutrpayc worried
- logatimrhs lead youngsters
- extreme sexual and ventoli content
- a oupnodfr risk of harm
- children and dcentleasso
- an nmegeeryc
- double the risk of xytiane
- sdnropeies symptoms
- warnings on atetrcgsie

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. i	3. h	4. a	5. j
6. c	7. f	8. b	9. d	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Social Media

You think social media is the thing we most need warnings for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as in need of warnings. Also, tell the others which is the thing we least need to be warned about (and why): cigarettes, fast food or jet coasters.

### Role B – Cigarettes

You think cigarettes is the thing we most need warnings for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as in need of warnings. Also, tell the others which is the thing we least need to be warned about (and why): social media, fast food or jet coasters.

### Role C – Fast Food

You think fast food is the thing we most need warnings for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as in need of warnings. Also, tell the others which is the thing we least need to be warned about (and why): cigarettes, social media or jet coasters.

### Role D – Jet Coasters

You think jet coasters is the thing we most need warnings for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as in need of warnings. Also, tell the others which is the thing we least need to be warned about (and why): cigarettes, fast food or social media.

## Speaking – Warnings

Rank these with your partner. Put the things we most need warnings on at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| • Social media | • Cars         |
| • Cigarettes   | • Bank loans   |
| • Alcohol      | • Jet coasters |
| • Fast food    | • Smartphones  |

### Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	F	4	F	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.