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Top US doctor wants social media health warnings – 20th June 2024

Level 0

Social media has changed the world. The USA's top doctor said it can cause mental health problems in young people. Dr Vivek Murthy wants mental health warnings on social media sites. He said youngsters see too much sex and violence online. He wants warnings that say social media can harm mental health.

In Dr Murthy's recent warning, he said: "The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency." He said young people spend too much time online. He said teenagers "who spend more than three hours a day on social media [could] double the risk of anxiety and depression".

Level 1

Social media has changed the world. The USA's top doctor said one bad thing is it can cause mental health problems. Dr Vivek Murthy wants mental health warnings to be put on social media sites. He is worried that youngsters see too much sexual and violent content online. He said it was time to put warning labels on social media sites. The label would say social media is linked to mental health harms in young people.

In 2023, Murthy warned that social media could harm the mental health of children. In his recent warning, he wrote: "The mental health crisis among young people is an emergency. Social media [is] an important contributor." He also said young people spend too much time online. He said teenagers "who spend more than three hours a day on social media face double the risk of anxiety and depression".

Level 2

Social media has changed the world, for good and for bad. The USA's top doctor said one bad thing is it can cause mental health problems. Dr Vivek Murthy wants social media companies to put mental health warnings on their sites. He is worried about the harm social media does to young people. He said youngsters see too much extreme sexual and violent content. Murthy said: "It is time to require a...warning label...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 wanted tighter controls of social media for many years. In 2023, he warned that social media could harm the mental health of children. His recent warning is published in 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 also said young people spend too long online. He warned that teenagers "who spend more than three hours a day on social media face double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms".

Level 3

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.