

Surgeon General Warns Against Social Media Use by Children and Adolescents

The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, has issued a rare public health warning about the risks of social media use by children and adolescents. In a 19-page advisory, Murthy cites growing evidence that social media use can have a negative impact on mental health, sleep, and academic performance.

The advisory specifically warns about the potential for social media to:

- **Increase the risk of depression and anxiety:** Studies have shown that adolescents who use social media for more than two hours a day are more likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- **Interfere with sleep:** The blue light emitted from screens can suppress the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate sleep. This can lead to difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep.
- **Reduce academic performance:** Teenagers who spend more time on social media are more likely to get lower grades and have lower test scores.

Murthy also notes that social media can be a positive force for children and adolescents. For example, social media can help young people connect with friends and family, learn new things, and express themselves creatively. However, he emphasizes that the risks of social media use outweigh the benefits for many young people.

The advisory calls on parents, policymakers, and technology companies to take steps to reduce the risks of social media use by children and adolescents. For parents, this includes talking to their children about the potential risks of social media and setting limits on their use. Policymakers can regulate social media companies to make them more accountable for the content that is shared on their platforms. And technology companies can develop new features to help users manage their time on social media and reduce their exposure to harmful content.

The surgeon general's warning is a wake-up call for parents, policymakers, and technology companies. We need to take action to protect our children from the harmful effects of social media.

How to Talk to Your Kids About Social Media

The surgeon general's warning is a good opportunity to talk to your kids about social media. Here are a few tips for starting the conversation:

- Start by asking your kids about their social media use. How much time do they spend on social media each day? What do they use it for?
- Talk about the potential risks of social media use. Be sure to emphasize the risks of cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and addiction.
- Set limits on your kids' social media use. This could mean limiting the amount of time they spend on social media each day or restricting the types of apps they can use.
- Monitor your kids' social media use. This doesn't mean you have to read their messages or check their posts every day. But it does mean being aware of what they're doing online.

Talking to your kids about social media is an important way to help them stay safe and healthy.