

Teens Social Media Use During COVID-19: Tips for Parents

Peers and Socialization

Key Considerations

- What platforms are youth using to interact with their peers?
- How much time are youth passively scrolling versus directly interacting?
- What features are available in the social media tools they are using?

Tips for Parents

- Encourage teens to use platforms that more closely resemble in-person interactions (e.g., videochat) to promote social connection
- Coach teens in online social skills and guide appropriate use of social media

Physical Health

Key Considerations

- How much time are teens spending on social media?
- At what times of day are teens using social media?

Tips for Parents

- Help teens set up routines, especially around bed and wake times
- Set limits on time spent on social media, recognizing flexibility may be needed
- Keep or establish rules around “bedtime” and screen time, limiting use during the 30-60 minutes before bedtime and use in the bedroom

Self-Esteem, Body Image, and Mood

Key Considerations

- What social media activities do teens find make them feel good, and which do not?

Tips for Parents

- Engage teens in discussion about the pros and cons of their social media use
- Encourage teens to use social media “mindfully,” paying attention to personal risks and benefits
- Seek support from a professional for serious concerns about teens’ mental health (effectivechildtherapy.org)

Resources and Information

Key Considerations

- Where are teens reading or learning information about COVID-19, and are these sources accurate?
- Are teens accessing helpful resources for managing emotions related to COVID-19?

Tips for Parents

- Direct teen to trusted information sources (e.g., WHO, CDC) and resources for managing stress (e.g., COVIDCoach app, meditation apps like Headspace and Calm)
- Help teens evaluate the accuracy of information they come across online
- Fact check information and report rumors (<https://bit.ly/3ahGFDq>)
- www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-coping-with-covid-19.shtml

Overall

Key Considerations

- How can parents best support teens in the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in regard to social media use?

Tips for Parents

- Be a role model with how, why, and when to use social media
- Be forgiving of yourself and your teen during this time
- Take advantage of social media’s benefits together with teens
- Check out tip sheets for parents at www.common sense media.org
- Consider creating a Family Media Use Plan at www.healthychildren.org