



Social media and body image

Teens who use social media see a lot of content focused on physical appearance.

Development & body image

Teens are developing their body image during adolescence. They can be sensitive about their appearance, may compare themselves to others and can be vulnerable to false or misleading messages about “health,” “fitness,” or “beauty”.

Teens’ brains are also not fully developed [until around the age of 25](#), which can make it hard to control impulses, regulate emotions, or assess risks and consequences.

Online spaces that allow teens to express themselves and be part of supportive and safe communities can be positive. This is especially true for some [trans and non-binary youth](#) who may not be able to present themselves in ways that feel authentic in their “offline” lives.

But social media content that tries to influence ideas of what a “normal” or “healthy” body is can leave teens feeling bad about themselves. When teens [use social media less often](#), they feel better about their weight and appearance.

The influence of influencers

Social media content for teens often focuses on clothes, make-up, fitness, and eating. Influencers offer lots of advice on these topics, but the information shared is not always healthy, reliable, or even true.

For teens, constant exposure to these messages can affect how they think and feel about their bodies. They may have trouble judging which images are real and which are fake (stylized, filtered, AI-enhanced, and so on).

Social media use has a negative effect on body image and eating in some youth, especially younger teens and [girls](#). For teen boys, it’s more often linked to [muscle dysmorphia](#) (being preoccupied with becoming more muscular).

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

- Check in often to ask teens about what they see on social media, and their opinions about it.
- Show respect and acceptance for different body sizes and shapes. Don’t reinforce negative messaging about appearance.
- Find out why teens are using social media (sometimes it’s boredom). Determine if there’s a different way to meet their needs.
- Watch for concerning signs, such as sudden changes to eating habits or starting special diets.
- Speak to a trusted health professional if you have concerns.



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