

Social Media and Youth Mental Health: Questions for Parents to Consider



Vice Admiral Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A
Surgeon General of the United States

Time

- How much time is my child spending online?
- Is it taking away from healthy offline activities, such as exercising, seeing friends, reading, and sleeping?
- Are there healthy limits I can set on my child's use of technology, such as limiting screen time to specific times of the day or week, or limiting certain kinds of uses?

Content

- Am I aware of what devices and content my child has access to?

- Is my child getting something meaningful and constructive out of content they are looking at, creating, or sharing?
- How do I know? Are there healthier ways my child could engage online? (Examples: Finding meal recipes, researching options for a family outing, video chatting with a relative, etc.)
- Is being online riskier for my child than for some other children? For example, does my child have a mental health condition that might make them react more strongly to certain kinds of stressful or emotional content?

Impact

- How does my child feel about the time they spend online?
- Is my child engaging because they want to, or because they feel like they have to?
- How can I create space for open conversations with my child about their experiences online?
- How do I feel about my own use of technology? Can I be a better role model for my child?

