

quick risk assessment[™]

Your Social Media Life

By Eric Endlich, PhD



Adults spend an average of more than two hours a day on social media, and teens often spend even more. While users sometimes feel more connected to loved ones or discover entertaining content, excessive use can worsen anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

Assess the impact of your habits by answering the questions below. For each question, select from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very often).

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|---|---|
| <p>❶ I check social media first thing in the morning or last thing at night.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❸ I replace in-person interactions with texting or commenting.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❷ I lose track of time while scrolling.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❹ I focus on capturing or sharing moments instead of enjoying them.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❹ Seeing others' posts leaves me envious or dissatisfied.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❺ I've tried unsuccessfully to cut back on social media use.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❺ I post mainly to get likes or attention.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❻ Notifications interrupt my time with friends or family.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❻ I feel lonelier after spending time online.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | |

Socializing Boosts Your Health

Research shows that our friendships and social connections directly help maintain our health and may increase our longevity. Maybe you had a physical exam from a health care provider this year, but did you talk about your social life?

High-quality relationships reduce the risk of chronic disease and illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, dementia and depression, according to the CDC. Some of the research on the importance of social connection comes from studying loneliness. About one in three adults in the U.S. reports feeling lonely. This is regarded now as so important, your provider may ask if you regularly spend time with friends.

People are naturally social and look to others to feel a sense of belonging and importance. We look for community to help us survive and thrive.

Friends help with your emotional and physical health. If you just lost someone important to you, a friend can listen while you talk about your grief. Or if you just had surgery, a friend may bring you groceries or help take care of you while you recover.

Social connections extend beyond just friends. They include your neighbors, schools, workplaces, places of worship and other larger communities. And don't forget book clubs, interest groups and volunteering.

Here are some tips from the National Institute on Aging for how to build social connections:

- Try to make the most of your social time spent in person.
- Find an activity you enjoy, start a hobby or take a class to learn something new.
- Schedule a time each day to reach out to others by email, text or voice.
- To help you keep connected with someone who lives far away, use video chat.



Tally your score:

- 10 to 20:** You likely have a balanced relationship with social media.
- 21 to 35:** Social media may sometimes affect your mood or relationships.
- 36 to 50:** Social media use could be undermining your well-being.

For healthy social media habits:

- ✓ Set daily time limits. Use a monitoring app if needed.
- ✓ Designate social media-free times (e.g., family mealtimes) to help you engage in real life.
- ✓ Notice how you feel before and after scrolling through content.
- ✓ Unfollow people or topics that make you feel worse about yourself.
- ✓ Spend time daily on screen-free activities you enjoy.

Tech Neck Relief

If you're reading this on your phone or tablet, you may already have tech neck — pain and stiffness in the back of your neck, caused by constantly looking down at devices. An adult's head weighs roughly ten to 12 pounds, and your neck supports it with ease when you're looking straight ahead.

However, when you tilt your head downward, say when you're scrolling through messages on your phone, that stress on your neck can increase up to 50 to 60 pounds, which can lead to neck pain, stiffness or numbness. Other symptoms include headaches and shoulder tension. Even worse, not addressing tech neck symptoms can lead to long-term problems such as chronic neck pain, muscle imbalances, joint degeneration and herniated discs.

Here are some tips to help you prevent tech neck:

Limit your screen time. If you can't, take frequent breaks (every 20 to 30 minutes) to stand up, stretch and adjust your position. Set a timer as a reminder.

Make sure your workspace is ergonomically correct: screen at eye level, feet flat on floor and knees at 90° angle. Use a chair with lumbar support and arm rests.

Consider using a stand for your phone, tablet or laptop so that it is eye level while viewing it.

Think about getting a separate monitor for your laptop and setting it up so that it is eye level and 20 to 40 inches away.

Perform stretching exercises for your shoulders and neck regularly to alleviate stiffness. Contact your health care provider for suggestions.



Protein Needs for Adults

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Protein is an essential nutrient found in many foods, including chicken, tofu and yogurt. Your body uses protein to build and repair muscle, support immune health, make hormones and more.

You can't store protein in the body, so you need to eat protein-rich foods regularly throughout the day. This ensures there are always enough amino acids (building blocks of protein) available to meet the body's needs.

Protein-rich foods include:

- Poultry — chicken, turkey, etc.
- Meat — beef, lamb, pork, etc.
- Fish and seafood.
- Dairy foods — milk, cheese and yogurt.
- Soy foods— tofu, edamame and soy beverages.
- Legumes— lentils, beans and chickpeas.
- Nuts, seeds and nut butters.
- Eggs.

An easy way to ensure you're getting enough protein is to choose one of these protein-rich foods at every meal. It should fill about ¼ of your plate, which will provide 20 to 30 grams of protein per meal.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (the organization that sets nutrient intakes in the U.S. and Canada) recommends adults get 10% to 35% of calories from protein each day. That's equal to 50 grams to 175 grams of protein per day (on a 2000-calorie diet).

It's a very general range of amounts, because protein needs vary based on your gender, age, height, weight, activity levels, medical conditions and other factors. Men typically need more protein than women due to larger body size and muscle mass (on average and not always the case). Physically active people need more protein to help repair and build muscle after exercise. Children need adequate protein since they aren't just maintaining tissue; they're building new tissue as they grow.

If you are unsure of how much you need, get personalized advice from a dietitian (check your insurance coverage first).



Medication Disposal the Right Way

Got old prescriptions or outdated over-the-counter medications cluttering your cabinets? The easiest way to dispose of them is through your local Drug Take Back program or mail them through a prepaid drug mail-back envelope — some pharmacies may offer these envelopes at no cost. Ask your pharmacist for take back dates and locations near you. Some locations may sponsor take back events while others offer year-round drop-off locations.

No Drug Take Back location near you? No problem. Just follow these steps to safely discard medicated liquids and pills:

❶ **Take** your meds out of their original containers and mix them with something unpleasant such as dirt, coffee grounds or cat litter. This makes them less tempting for kids

or pets who might find them. **Note:** Aerosol or spray inhaler medications have specific handling instructions. Contact your local trash or recycling facility to learn about local laws and regulations.

❷ **Seal** the mixture in a closeable container such as a resealable storage bag or old container with a lid. Toss it in the trash.

❸ **Remove** personal information on empty prescription bottles or boxes before throwing them away or recycling them.

Important: Never flush anything down the toilet except toilet paper and bodily waste. Doing so helps reduce chemical contamination in the environment, according to wastewater agencies. While the FDA has a Flush List for medications it considers safe, it's better to use the methods described above.



Smart Moves Toolkit: personalbest.com/extras/26V4tools. Printable download: [Q&A: Why does serotonin matter?](#)

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