

Neil - Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil. ... Beth? What are you doing? Get off your phone!

Beth - Ohh, sorry. And I'm Beth.

Neil - Are you **addicted to social media**? It wouldn't be a surprise. With so many different apps out there, Snapchat, TikTok, and the latest, Threads, it's easy to spend a lot more time on your phone than ever before.

Beth - Yes. I don't think I'm addicted, but I definitely **spend more time on social media** than I would like to. However, there are plenty of studies out there looking at how **social media affects mental health** with some saying it can be as **addictive** as gambling.

Neil - Research in the US has found that **adolescents** who spend more than three hours a day on social media have double **the risk of developing depression and anxiety**. An **adolescent** is someone aged 10 to 19, between childhood and adulthood. With that in mind, it's no wonder parents are worried. To help with this, the US is currently in the process of **regulating social media apps for teenagers**. Some scientists think the UK should do the same.

Beth - There has been growing agreement among health experts about the **negative, chronic health effects of social media use on teenagers**. They have revealed in surveys that **social media makes them feel worse about their body image**, and 64% of teens have said they are regularly **exposed to hate-based content**. In this programme, we'll be discussing how social media affects teenagers, and, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new vocabulary as well.

Neil - But first I have a question for you, Beth. The app Snapchat is a very common way that teenagers communicate these days. This is partly because messages and photos disappear after a certain time period. But, what percentage of 13 to 24-year-olds use Snapchat? Is it: a) 70%
b) 80% or c) 90%

Beth - I'll guess 80%.

Neil - OK, Beth, I'll **reveal the answer** later in the programme. Now, a lot of social media platforms, such as TikTok, work by showing and suggesting similar accounts and content to those someone has already searched for. Professor Devi Sridhar, the chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh, thinks this can be concerning, as she told BBC World Service programme, Inside Science:

Professor Devi Sridhar - And this is worrying for example, with young girls and **eating disorders**, that they're being **fed** that in an addictive way and the **algorithm** is saying 'oh they like that content. We want to keep giving it to them because it keeps them on their phones', and I think that's the really vital message here, of any of these apps, is that their **revenue** comes from advertising.

Beth - Teenagers are being **fed** content in a way that is addictive. If you are **fed** something, it means you are given something. In this case, it refers to content, not food. The content is addictive because social media uses **algorithms**. **Algorithms** are a complex set of rules and calculations that **prioritise and personalise the content** a user sees.

Neil - But we need to remember that **social media platforms use algorithms** to keep users on the platforms for as long as possible because the **revenue** comes from advertising. **Revenue** is the money a company earns. They are paid by other companies to use the social media space to promote their products.

Beth - This could be seen as social media platforms prioritising making money over the mental health of users – a worry for parents. Professor Devi Sridhar talked about the challenges of having a teenager addicted to social media on BBC World Service programme, Inside Science:

Professor Devi Sridhar - And so, I think the challenge here, as a parent, listening to this is what do you do about it. And I think the **onus** has really been put on parents and **concerned** adults to find solutions on their own. And that means debates with your child over what are you on, are you using this, but it's **a losing battle** because it's their entire social network.

Beth - Professor Sridhar says that, when it comes to helping teenagers navigate social media, the **onus** has been put on parents to find solutions. The **onus** means the responsibility or duty. Parents need to be able to challenge their children when they need to, even if this is a **losing battle**, a fight they cannot win, as teenagers have their 'entire life' on social networks.

Neil - OK, Beth. I think it's time I revealed the answer to my question. I asked you what percentage of 13 to 24-year-olds use Snapchat?

Beth - And I said it was 80%.

Neil - And that was... I'm sorry to say, the wrong answer! Actually 90% of people aged between 13 and 24 use Snapchat – quite a lot. OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned from this programme, starting with **adolescent**, a person aged 10 to 19: between childhood and adulthood.

Beth - If you are **fed content**, you are given content. This is what the social media platform offers you automatically, rather than what you search for yourself.

Neil - **Algorithms** are a complex set of rules and calculations that prioritise and personalise the content a user sees.

Beth - **Revenue** is the money a company earns, which could come from sales or advertising.

Neil - If the **onus** is on someone, it's their responsibility or duty.

Beth - And finally, a **losing battle** is a fight you cannot win. Once again, our six minutes are up. Join us again soon for more useful vocabulary, here at 6 Minute English! Goodbye for now!

1. What is the main focus of the text?

- A The benefits of social media for teenagers.
- B The negative effects of social media on teenagers.
- C The history of social media platforms.
- D The financial revenue generated by social media companies.

According to the text, how does the app Snapchat appeal to teenagers?

- A Messages and photos disappear after a certain time period.
- B It offers free access to premium content.
- C It has a high number of advertisements.
- D It allows users to make international calls.

What concern does Professor Devi Sridhar express about social media algorithms?

- A They prioritize promoting healthy eating habits.
- B They encourage active outdoor activities.
- C They feed addictive content to young users.
- D They limit the amount of time users spend on the platform.

What is the primary source of revenue for social media platforms?

- A Subscription fees paid by users.
- B Government grants for research.
- C Advertising from other companies.
- D Sale of user data to third parties.

What does the term "onus" mean in the context of the text?

- A A social media influencer.
- B A trending hashtag.
- C Responsibility or duty.
- D A viral video challenge.