

SOCIAL MEDIA, INTERNET “CHALLENGES” AND TEENAGERS

The health risks and implications for
adolescent health care

Learning Objectives

- Explore so-called internet challenges –teens video recording themselves taking high risks that have serious health consequences.
- Explore the impact of social media use on adolescents who may be at risk for depression, anxiety, and cyber-bullying with persistent use of media sites.
- The implications for persistent social media used by Teens for providers and appropriate treatment strategies will be discussed.

1. The prevalence of social media use has become exceedingly popular among teens and adolescents . Increased use has led to a better understanding of the rise associated with it.

2. According to recent studies by Lenhart about 92% of teens report use of the internet daily and 71% use at least two different types of social media sites.

3. Social media sites such as facebook, instagram twitter, myspace and snapchap may be discribed as online communities that permit an individual to create a profile in which they can and communicate with others.

4. Concerns by parents that their children are opening to much time on social media at the expense of interaction with school and family are being reported with increased frequency and alarm to health providers. Research and clinical experience is now reporting that persistent and over intense use of social media is having negative consequences on the well-being of adolescents.

5. Negative consequences on the well-being of adolescent overuse has been linked to lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, increased depression, risk taking behaviors and cyber bullying.

6. Studies by Bhagat show that over use of social media is correlated with psychosocial problems, and can be even more damaging to teens who are already predisposed to anxiety, depression, or mental disorders.

7. Adolescents are more often than not aware of what social media exposes them to the impact it may have on their self-esteem and their pscho emotional health.

8. The evidence based finding over 200 studies throughout the world seeking an understanding of the potential impact that social media may have on the health of young people concluded that overuse of social media had the greatest health impact on self-esteem , well-being, body image , with related issues regarding cyberbullying and “facebook depression”.

9. Systematic reviews of over 2000 published articles on the influence of social media on teens seem to indicate that symptoms and signs of depression may be related to prolonged use of social network sites and low self-esteem may be associated with certain social networking activities.

10. The studies on the use of social networking sites and their impact on teens's social self-concept, self-esteem, sleep quality, anxiety and depressed mood rest on the nature of the investment and frequency of the youngsters use of social networking. The more frequent use, the greater the risk for psychosocial problems.

11. It is imperative that healthcare providers, teachers, and parents become familiar with the different types of social media outlets and their use, as well as the length of time spent using social media by the adolescent population they care for. The more popular sites used by teens include facebook snapchat, twitter and instagram

12. The media sites are used to send and receive information about themselves to friends as well as strangers . We must be aware that these sites are open for the public to view unless the information is protected manually which is often not done by teens.

13. For providers of health care must do routine screenings to assess the risk of depression associated with social media use. One needs to engage the youngsters in conversations of cyberbullying, the array of on-line contacts and especially the time the adolescents spends on social media.

14. The increase in social media use by teens has led to so-called “internet challenges” which involve teenagers videoing themselves , taking sometimes dangerous dares that can have very grave consequences.

15. Some of the more popular challenges are as follows:

- Cinanamon challenge
- Condom challenge
- Duct tape challenge
- Salt and ice challenge
- Eraser challenge
- Kylie Jenner Challenge
- Banana Sprite challenge

15.(cont)

- The Chubby Bunny Challenge or
- Cracker Challenge
- The fire spray challenge and
- The fire challenge

16. Implications for teen care:

- Parents may not be aware of their teen's "challenge" attempts
- An acute care visit to an urgent care site or provider office unbeknown to the parent or physician for lip swelling, projectile vomiting, skin infections, burns or respiratory distress have a high index of suspicion.

17. Care given to a teen who attempted a “challenge” must be handled with sensitivity, understanding , and patience but with confidence in exploring the events as some would handle discussions about sexuality, drugs or alcohol.

18. Speaking privately with the teen before discussing the issues with the parent can be very helpful at getting at the truth . A supportive team approach with parent and provider must follow.

19. The event needs to be explored to determine if it was a copycat prank or an attempt at self-harm or suicide. The internet might not have increased the incidence of self-harm , but it has “normalized” the behaviors.

20. An “attemptor” must be screened for other self-harm behaviors, the presence of anxiety, depression, stress, and the possibility of bullying within the personal or online social media and referred to a mental health if intent of self-harm is noted.

21. Collaboration between primary care providers, school nurses, guidance counselors are crucial. Community awareness through education and discussions with adolescents can reduce the inherent risk behaviors significantly.