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**Is Social Media Causing Obesity?**

**Olivia Murray, Opinion contributor** Published 1:00 P.M. ET June 14, 2018 | **Updated 10:30 PM. ET June 14, 2018**

*Americans keep gaining weight and social media continues to skyrocket. Is the obesity going to continue to grow?*

** Americans all over the country have become hooked on socialmedia since it first became available on the internet and phones. The site Six Degrees is said to be the starting point for the social media skyrocket and has influenced a lot of social networking companies today. While the social media numbers continue to grow, so do the numbers on the scale. Research from a journal from *Brain and Cognition* revealed that the brain goes through serious changes in response to food images that showcase physiological hunger. Sixty three percent of social media users between the ages of 13 to 32 are having their social media feeds stuffed with unhealthy pictures of foods and recipes. Between the lack of exercise and movement due to the obsession with social media and the unhealthy pictures of food all over social media, it’s safe to say that social media is contributing heavily to the rise in obesity in America.

Dr. Okan Yildiz suggests that sharing foods and drinks via social media is triggering others and making it a continuing trend. Social media allows for us to share what’s going on in our lives, but it does not necessarily fit into real life. Social media can do a lot for a human but it is not going to sleep for you, it is not going to exercise for you, and it’s not going to do things for you that can improve your overall health. It’s been noticed that humans are simply not as active since social networking became popular. Do we want our country to continue to be known as lazy and obese?

Not only is it devastating enough that obesity is happening in all age ranges, but it’s even more devastating that childhood obesity has skyrocketed due to social media starting at such a young age because of the exposure to television and internet at such a young age. Dr. Yildiz’s research showed a strong correlation between lack of exercise and social media, which connects to obesity. Youth spend an average of 7 hours a day in front of some sort of screen, so they are being exposed to this technology at a young age and are becoming obsessed with it. Studies show that 25% of children as young as 2 to 5 years old have a television in their room. How can we expect children to live a normal lifestyle where they play outside with their friends, play sports, and build forts when older generations are constantly setting examples of saying that technology and social media is what is really important? The number of children aging from 6-11 that are obese has doubled since the 1980’s is very eye opening. The dramatic change in the number of obese children was around the time that the internet and phones really started booming and 10 years later was when the first social networking site was published. Additionally, researchers estimate that 80% of these children will continue to be obese into adulthood, and these unhealthy ways could potentially affect future health care costs in the United States in a negative way.

Food companies have started to use the internet to reach out to the younger generation to make more money. Many companies have “kid clubs” where you can play games on their websites that often involve a food item that they’re selling. Not only is this keeping the children on the internet longer, but it is also making them see this food item over and over again and raises the odds of them trying it sooner or later. Burger King used this method with their kid’s club that they developed in 1991 and since they’ve created this club, their kid meal sales have increased by a whopping 300 %.

It is clear that the link between obesity and social media is real, but what is being done about it and how can you make a difference? Here are three tips on how to avoid gaining weight while living a connected lifestyle. The first tip is to cook at home and plan out your meals ahead of time instead of eating out at fast food joints. The second tip is to control your social media food pages so you don’t see as many food posts that you are tempted to try yourself. If you follow a lot of unhealthy food pages you might want to hit the unfollow button to help control yourself. The third and final tip is to get out and be active. Put the phone or computer down and go for a walk, take a bike ride, or head to the gym. These tips are all things we can work on as humans, but if we really start trying then maybe social media and obesity will not be as connected.

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