



## Docs Warn About Facebook Use, Teen Depression

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CHICAGO (AP) — Add “Facebook depression” to potential harms linked with social media, an influential doctors’ group warns, referring to a condition it says may affect troubled teens who obsess over the online site.

Researchers disagree on whether it’s simply an extension of depression some kids feel in other circumstances, or a distinct condition linked with using the online site.

But there are unique aspects of Facebook that can make it a particularly tough social landscape to navigate for kids already dealing with poor self-esteem, said Dr. Gwenn O’Keeffe, a Boston-area pediatrician and lead author of new American Academy of Pediatrics social media guidelines.

With in-your-face friends’ tallies, status updates and photos of happy-looking

people having great times, Facebook pages can make some kids feel even worse if they think they don’t measure up.

It can be more painful than sitting alone in a crowded school cafeteria or other real-life encounters that can make kids feel down, O’Keeffe said, because Facebook provides a skewed view of what’s really going on. Online, there’s no way to see facial expressions or read body language that provide context.

The guidelines urge pediatricians to encourage parents to talk with their kids about online use and to be aware of Facebook depression, cyberbullying, sexting and other online risks. They were published online Monday in Pediatrics.

Abby Abolt, 16, a Chicago high school sophomore and frequent Facebook user, says the site has never made her feel depressed, but that she can understand how it might affect some kids.

“If you really didn’t have that many friends and weren’t really doing much

with your life, and saw other peoples’ status updates and pictures and what they were doing with friends, I could see how that would make them upset,” she said.

“It’s like a big popularity contest—who can get the most friend requests or get the most pictures tagged,” she said.

Also, it’s common among some teens to post snotty or judgmental messages on the Facebook walls of people they don’t like, said Gaby Navarro, 18, a senior from Grayslake, Ill. It’s happened to her friends, and she said she could imagine how that could make some teens feel depressed.

“Parents should definitely know about these practices,” Navarro said. “It’s good to raise awareness about it.”

The academy guidelines note that online harassment “can cause profound psychosocial outcomes,” including suicide. The widely publicized suicide of a 15-year-old Massachusetts girl last year occurred after she’d been bullied and harassed, in

person and on Facebook.

“Facebook is where all the teens are hanging out now. It’s their corner store,” O’Keeffe said.

She said the benefits of kids using social media sites like Facebook shouldn’t be overlooked, however, such as connecting with friends and family, sharing pictures and exchanging ideas.

“A lot of what’s happening is actually very healthy, but it can go too far,” she said.

Dr. Megan Moreno, a University of Wisconsin adolescent medicine specialist who has studied online social networking among college students, said using Facebook can enhance feelings of social connectedness among well-adjusted kids, and have the opposite effect on those prone to depression.

Parents shouldn’t get the idea that using Facebook “is going to somehow infect their kids with depression,” she said.

## Relay For Life Meeting Tonight

Want to learn more about Relay For Life? Do you have a team?

You won’t want to miss this important Information/Team Captain meeting at 6 p.m. tonight (Monday, April 4) at Yesterday’s Café.

This meeting is a great opportunity to learn more about the 2011 event and get ideas for your team fundraisers.

If you are unable to attend, but want more information, please contact Darla Gullikson at 668-8850.



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Renewed vitality may come in spring after the body has a chance to balance the level of hormones.

## Spring Fever Syndrome — It Really Is A Legit Condition

There are many people who associate the arrival of spring with a renewed sense of energy that borders on the frantic. But such spring fever is actually quite the opposite ... at least in the beginning.

Spring fever is a term used to classify a mood change characterized by low energy, fatigue and apathy early in the spring season. Similar to seasonal affective disorder (SAD), spring fever is a mental condition brought on by the change in seasons. It is common in people who also suffer from SAD. Eventually, spring fever may evolve into feelings of restlessness, intense nervous excitement, high-energy spurts and loss of appetite.

The condition is a chemical response in the body to its circadian rhythm spurred on by sunlight. In the winter, there are fewer hours of sunlight. Sunlight has a direct effect on the production of serotonin and melatonin. Serotonin is the feel-good chemical messenger that affects mood and other bodily functions. In the darker, colder seasons, serotonin can be in short supply, which is why many people feel blue these times of the year. Melatonin is the chemical component that is related to sleep and wakefulness. When there are more hours of darkness, the body produces more melatonin, which in turn makes a person tired.

When the spring season arrives, the body can take a while to readjust to the correct levels. Therefore, a person may initially have residual melatonin and a short supply of serotonin in the early spring, accounting for the tiredness and irritability. As the chemical messengers decrease and increase according to sunlight, the reverse takes effect. A person may have extra energy and actually feel little need to sleep.

There is also some biological evidence that the seasonal change may affect human conception. Studies show that late winter and spring babies are commonplace, meaning that a number of conceptions take place during the warm-weather months.

As the body readjusts hormonally to the changes in seasons, there could be a fluctuation of moods until the full feelings of vitality known during the spring season set in.

While spring often evokes feelings of elation and rejuvenation in adults and children alike, it is important to recognize that suicide rates also increase with the change in seasons, perhaps as a result of hormonal imbalances in the body.

## Spring Not Fun For Allergy Sufferers

Many embrace the spring thanks to its warm weather and budding flowers and trees. Those with seasonal allergies, however, may not look so favorably on the new season.

According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation, about 50 million Americans experience spring allergies. Some may have allergies each and every year. Others may find their allergies are newly discovered. The most common allergy triggers in spring include trees, grasses and weeds.

Allergies can evoke a number of symptoms:

- itchy eyes
- sneezing
- congestion
- headaches
- coughing
- runny nose
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- hives

Several of the symptoms of allergies mimic those of the common cold, and allergies are often mistaken for late winter colds. But as time spent outdoors with flowering plants triggers symptoms or inhalation of dust from spring cleaning induces an attack,

the allergy culprit may become more apparent.

Pollen is one of the main contributors to allergies in the spring. For many people, pollen is seen as an outside invader to the body and its immune system. When pollen is inhaled or comes in contact with the eyes, the immune system triggers a response to get rid of the foreign substance. Excess mucous buildup and tears may be generated to wash out the pollen. What all of this fluid can mean is sinus pressure, runny nose, watery eyes, and eventually cough or congestion from fluids running down the breathing passages and into the lungs.

As the body prepares to fend off pollen invaders, other symptoms may occur. Fatigue, aches and pains and other flu-like symptoms may be present. While battling pollen, the immune system is in full swing and may not be able to fully devote attention to other invaders, like bacteria and viruses. A person with allergies might be more susceptible to sickness.

There really are no cures for common allergies, only methods to manage the symptoms. Individuals with strong allergies to pollen should avoid spending a lot of time outside when pollen counts are especially

high or the wind is blowing pollen around. Pollen predictions can be obtained through the local weather report or doing a little investigating online. Here are some other steps to limit troublesome springtime allergies.

- Take a shower to wash off pollen from hair and skin after coming indoors.
- Launder clothes regularly.
- Keep windows and doors closed on high pollen days.
- Use a HEPA air filter inside of the home.
- Do not air-dry clothes, linens or other items outdoors on a clothesline.
- Consider using a saline irrigation spray to improve breathing and cleanse the nasal passages of pollen.
- Talk with a doctor about the best OTC products available for allergy symptoms. If those are ineffective, prescription medications may work.
- Some people find relief from alternative health treatments, such as acupuncture or ear candling.

Being proactive about seasonal allergies can mean getting relief earlier or even preventing serious complications in the spring.

## The Hype About Heart-Healthy Red Wine

Red wine has recently been touted as a cure-all for heart ailments and its popularity has risen as a result. But there remains differing opinions as to the health benefits of red wine.

Red wine is made from fermented red and dark grapes where the skin is left on during the fermenting process. It is this skin that gives the wine its characteristic dark hue. White wine is produced in a similar fashion, although the grape skins are removed before fermentation.

Experts believe that substances in the grapes -- especially in the skins -- contribute to its heart-healthy nature. However, no one is really sure exactly what it is about wine that can make it advantageous to people looking to improve heart health.

Studies supporting red wine’s medical benefits suggest antioxidants in red wine called polyphenols help protect the lining of blood vessels in the heart.

Polyphenols come in flavonoids and nonflavonoids. Flavonoids are brightly colored plant pigments that occur naturally in most fresh fruits and vegetables. Nonflavonoids are largely vitamins, minerals and other plant pigments. Resveratrol is a non-flavonoid that gets the bulk of the credit when speaking of red wine’s medical benefits. Resveratrol is purported to help prevent damage to blood vessels while reducing “bad” cholesterol and may prevent blood clots.

It is important to note that much of the research on resveratrol and red wine has been conducted on mice and other animals, not people. For humans to acquire the amount of resveratrol given to lab animals to equate to the same health benefits, a person would have to consume 100 to 1,000 bottles of red wine a day.

Alcohol, in general, may be heart-healthy because it thins the blood and improves circulation. This can be advantageous to individuals who already are facing blockages in arteries and need improved blood flow. But grapes alone may also relax blood vessels allowing blood to flow more easily.

Red wine also contains vitamin C and other healthy substances, which can improve overall health. Although there are reasons to believe red wine can be a heart-healthy addition to one’s diet, doctors may be reticent to suggest it because alcohol use can present other problems, especially if it is abused. With this in mind, red or purple grape juice and whole grapes can be a viable alternative for those looking to get the benefits of resveratrol and other antioxidants without the down side of alcohol.

Grape juice provides much of the same benefits of red wine. Eating whole red or purple grapes does too, in addition to the benefit of fiber in one’s diet.

For those who want to go the red wine route, remember that alcohol should be consumed in moderation. That means one drink a day for women or up to two drinks a day for men.

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