

# Eating Disorders & Social Media

If you are a regular user of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr) think carefully about whether it is helpful for you. Take a moment to consider the effect social media has on how you feel and think about yourself.

**Taking a break from social media can be really powerful in building your self-esteem.**



Eating disorders are caused by a range of factors and the impact of social media could be one. Although it is difficult to disconnect yourself completely from media exposure– it is important to view content critically and protect yourself from potentially harmful influences.

If your Instagram feed is littered with #fitspo and #cleaneating posts, it may be time to rethink who is influencing you and what is helpful for you.

**Research shows that exposure to media images depicting the thin-ideal body is related to body image concerns for women.**

**“Media exposure is linked to women’s generalised dissatisfaction with their bodies, increased investment in appearance, and increased endorsement of disordered eating behaviours”.**

Source: Grabe S, Ward LM and Hyde JS (2008) The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. Psychological Bulletin 134: 460–476.

**While it is good to talk to others and get support, everyone is different and you might want to think about the following:**

- Images and messages that people post could hinder your recovery.
- It can be harder to get the private support you need on public forums.
- If you are posting on social media it is hard to know how others reading the message may react. Their response might bring up feelings that you were not expecting.
- People may start talking about what you are going through with other people before you are ready to tell them.

## Finding information online

There is a lot of information online about eating disorders. Look for websites from trustworthy sources such as government organisations and peak bodies. These sites can be a helpful resource in addition to support from health professionals.

**See our “Helpful Books and Resources” for more ideas.**

## Be aware!

Some websites can get in the way of recovering. Be wary of sites that promote unhealthy thinking and behaviours, minimise the significant implications of disordered eating, and may even discourage people from seeking help.

