NEWS LESSON

Is Social Media Making Wellness Too Hard to Escape?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. How often do you come across wellness content, and how do you usually react to it?
2. What makes a post about health feel trustworthy to you?
3. Why might companies want to sell the idea of wellness?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**supplement**	☐	A	all the money, jobs and businesses of a country or an industry
2	**residential**	☐	B	experts who know a lot about one subject
3	**economy**	☐	C	helpful advice about what to do
4	**interests**	☐	D	a pill or powder you take to try to improve your health
5	**profit**	☐	E	an expert who gives advice about food and health
6	**guidance**	☐	F	where people stay and live while they get care
7	**dietitian**	☐	G	what is good or useful for a person or a group
8	**specialists**	☐	H	to make money from something

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Eating disorder experts in Australia say online wellness content can blur the line between helpful health advice and old-fashioned diet culture, and they are asking one question: who really benefits?

1 Open almost any social media app and "wellness" is waiting for you: a morning routine, a supplement, a creator promising the secret to feeling better. In an ABC News report published in Australia on 1 November 2026, eating disorder specialists asked whether that endless stream of advice has become hard to escape, and whether it always helps the people who see it.

2 Kathleen McBride, 30, lives on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and works at a residential treatment centre after recovering from an eating disorder herself. She says that as a teenager she absorbed messages from adverts and celebrities suggesting that a woman's worth depended on her body. What worries her now is that the same ideas have come back under a friendlier name, reaching young people through algorithms that keep serving up wellness content.

3 Money sits behind much of this. The Global Wellness Institute, an industry research group, forecast in 2024 that the world wellness economy would reach about nine trillion US dollars by 2028. That figure is a forecast rather than a measurement. Still, the Butterfly Foundation, an Australian eating disorder charity, used it in September to make a point: with so much money at stake, people should ask whose interests are served by the messages they are sold about health.

4 The experts quoted are not against health information. Dr Angela Hinz, a researcher at the University of the Sunshine Coast, says young people are strongly interested in being healthy, and that this is not a bad thing in itself. Her concern is how the content is delivered. Short videos encourage what researchers call parasocial relationships, in which a viewer feels close to a creator who has never met them. When posts also carry misinformation, she says, viewers can end up treating the body as a project that is never finished.

5 It is worth being precise about what the report claims. Eating disorders are serious conditions with many causes, and nobody quoted says that social media creates them on its own. The charity and a dietitian interviewed point instead to diet culture, the belief that some bodies are better than others, and they describe dieting as one of the largest risk factors that can be changed. Social media is presented as a powerful way of spreading those ideas, and it can blur the line between health advice and advertising.

6 The remedies on offer differ. Dr Hinz would like stronger duty-of-care laws, so that harmful content is removed and creators who profit from it are held accountable. Avoiding all of this is easier said than done, and she stresses that the aim is better guidance, not no guidance: accurate health information should be easier to find. Anyone worried about their own eating can talk to a doctor or a support service. For everyone else, a useful habit is simple. When a wellness post makes you feel worse about yourself, ask who benefits if you believe it.

Sources: ABC News Australia, Eating disorder experts warn against online wellness trends; Butterfly Foundation, Who really benefits? Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week challenges the stories we're sold about 'wellness'. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Kathleen McBride's concern is that old messages about bodies have come back in a new form. T F NG
2. The figure used by the Butterfly Foundation was a measured result. T F NG
3. Dr Hinz thinks young people's interest in health is a bad thing. T F NG
4. The experts say that social media can help to spread diet culture. T F NG
5. The text says how many hours a day young Australians spend watching wellness videos. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

absorbed	bargain	blur	endless	precise	remedies	rumour	stake

1. As a teenager, she _____ the idea that her body decided her worth, simply from the adverts she saw every day.
2. With so much money at _____, companies work hard to keep customers interested.
3. Hidden brand deals can _____ the difference between a friend's tip and a sales pitch.
4. Scrolling can feel like an _____ loop, because new videos keep appearing every time you reach the bottom.
5. Doctors suggested several _____ for the problem, from clearer rules to better education.
6. Be _____ when you quote a statistic: say exactly where it comes from and what it measures.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. She had already _____ from an eating disorder when she took her job at the centre. (RECOVER)
2. According to Dr Hinz, harmful content ought to _____ as soon as it is flagged. (REMOVE)
3. Posts full of misinformation might _____ viewers feel worse about their bodies. (MAKE)
4. Eating disorders _____ by many different factors, not by social media alone. (CAUSE)
5. In 2024 the institute forecast that the wellness economy _____ about nine trillion US dollars by 2028. (REACH)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Many verbs and nouns take one fixed preposition. Notice the word before the gap: protect from, a ban on, succeed in.

at	from	in	of	on	to	with

1. Dr Hinz hopes for rules that protect young people _____ harmful content.
2. She says the aim is better guidance, not a ban _____ health advice.
3. The charity points _____ diet culture rather than social media alone.
4. Few experts would disagree _____ Dr Hinz that accurate guidance matters.
5. Platforms have not always succeeded _____ stopping harmful posts from spreading.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Where does helpful health advice end and pressure begin, in your view?
2. Who should carry the most responsibility for harmful posts: platforms, creators or viewers?
3. Has anything you have seen online changed how you think about your own habits?

9 Role-play: is this video really healthy?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the worried friend

Your friend follows a wellness creator who sells supplements and says people should skip meals. You're worried. Ask who earns money from the posts, and suggest a better way to get advice.

Student B · the friend who follows the creator

You enjoy the creator's videos and feel more motivated. Explain what you like about them. Listen to your friend, then decide if you'll change anything.

Useful phrases

I'm a bit worried about those videos.
Who's making money from this?
I don't think it's that simple.
That's a fair point, but I'd still check it.
It's just a routine, it's not a big deal.
Could we ask a doctor together?

Afterwards, tell the class: did the friend change their mind, and what would you do next?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 D · 2 F · 3 A · 4 G · 5 H · 6 C · 7 E · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 F · 4 T · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 absorbed · 2 stake · 3 blur · 4 endless · 5 remedies · 6 precise

6 Verb forms

1 recovered · 2 be removed · 3 make · 4 are caused · 5 would reach

7 Language focus

1 from · 2 on · 3 to · 4 with · 5 in

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