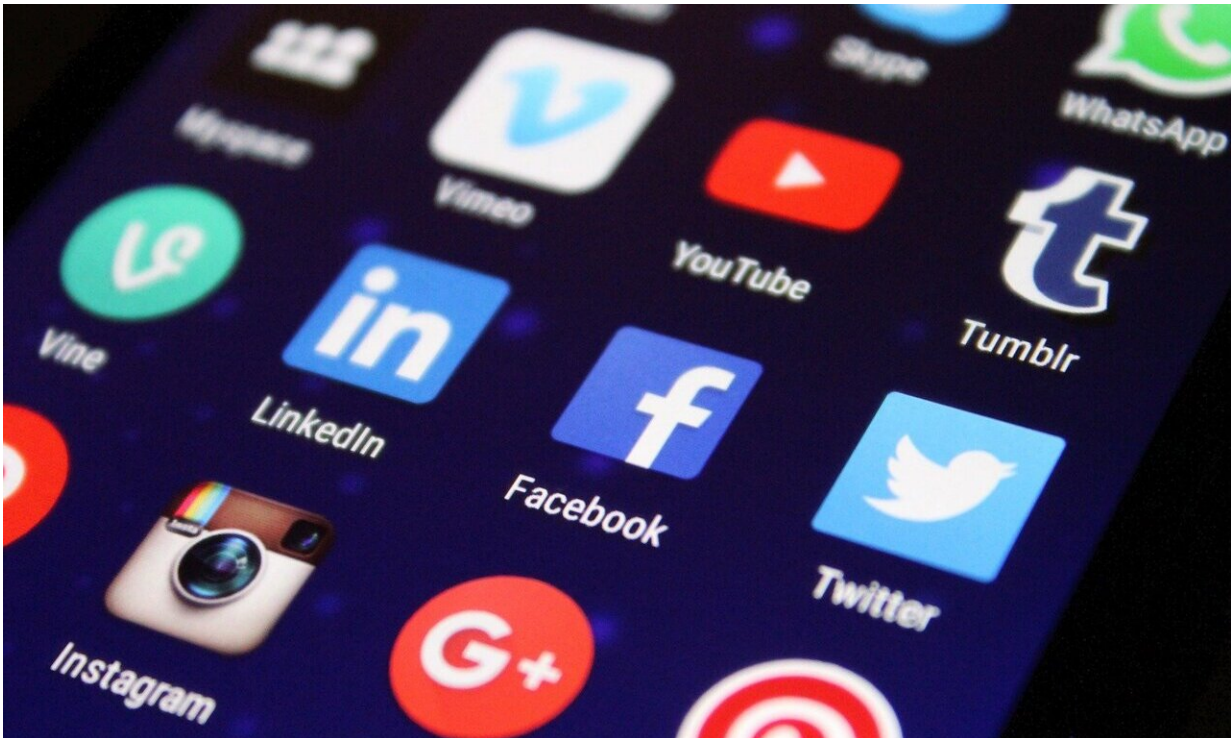


# Experts discuss social media and COVID-19

April 3 2020

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The world has moved online, seemingly overnight. Are we using social media more, and what does that mean?

Professor Jim Wallace, an expert in how computing systems like our smartphones can address problems in public health, talks about social media during the pandemic.

## **How is the COVID-19 pandemic changing the way people use social media?**

I think that in most of these cases we're not using social [media](#) any differently, but we're certainly using it more, and instead of more traditional information sources like newspapers and TV.

It feels like overnight we shifted from talking in person to online and everyday there is new information about COVID-19. It's hard to keep with it all. People are anxious to find out what they can do to stay healthy and safe, so we're all relying on [social media](#) more than ever for important news.

## **What advice do you have for people reading news updates about COVID-19 on social media?**

Try to slow down and consider what you're reading, especially before passing it on to others. One way of doing this is the [SIFT technique](#), which provides a framework to help us slow down, consider an article's claims, and to seek out alternative sources and perspectives.

Trust the experts. It's very tempting to become an armchair epidemiologist while working at home. One of the biggest challenges facing our [public health](#) workers is getting the public to trust and understand what they are doing while we're waiting for the results to pan out.

Finally, take breaks. It can all be overwhelming, and that's normal. You may find it best to only check the news once or twice a day, and then get back to your normal routine.

## **What are the short-term and long-term implications**

## **of relying on social media so much more than we did before?**

In the short term, moving online is going to be a big shift for many people. Home and work lives are colliding. Parents are struggling to keep children occupied. It's more difficult to get out and exercise, and easier to fall into our bad habits. There's going to be some bumps in moving to the "new normal", but we'll get past them.

In the long term, some of us are going to be impacted much more than others; for instance, a grandparent living alone or a family without internet access. As a society, we need to think about how we can support those groups through the pandemic to ensure everyone's health and wellbeing. Technology is going to play a role here, but it's not going to solve every problem.

Provided by University of Waterloo

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