

LIFE & TIMES **HEALTH**

HEALTH VIEW



STATIN USERS EAT MORE

A TWELVE-YEAR study has found that people who use statins gradually increase their consumption of fat and calories.

Researchers used data on statin use in 27,886 men and women participating in a larger health study, including a 24-hour dietary recall interview, cholesterol levels and body mass index. The analysis appears online in *Jama Internal Medicine*.

Statin use in the group more than doubled, to 16.5 per cent in 2010 from 7.5 per cent in 1999. As expected, levels of LDL ("bad" cholesterol) and total cholesterol both declined more in statin users than in those not taking the drug.

But daily calorie intake among statin users increased by nine per cent over the period, and fat consumption by 14.4 per cent, while in non-users, there were no significant changes in either measure.

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Cost of staying connected

Is social media harming our self-worth, wonders
Aznim Ruhana
Md Yusup

WEDDINGS are happy occasions, for the most part. But for Zack who attended five weddings in three weeks, it's been a bit too much.

Apart from the relentless "When is your turn?" question, he has to contend with online posts from the smug married couples.

The worst was perhaps a quote on Facebook on how love and marriage is a reward for the so-called good people. Are they implying, he wondered, that he is a terrible human being for not having found someone to spend his life with?

For Sara, work has become unbearable. It seems that's the only thing she is doing with her life and she gets the feeling that she isn't getting paid as well as some of her peers.

How is it that she is barely getting

by when others are jetting off on holiday every month?

So as if being swamped with work isn't bad enough, how about scrolling through Instagram only to see endless photos of friends lounging by the beach, or selfies at the Louvre or dishes at restaurants she can't afford?

These are just two stories of regular people whose lives are affected by what they see and read on social media.

It's fair to say that it is impossible to feel happy for others without a tinge of jealousy. But the truth is, what we see online is hardly the full picture. There is always an aspect of showing off when posting on social media, so can it lead to a self esteem issue for viewers?

HAPPILY ENGAGED

According to International Medical

University consultant psychiatrist Dr Philip George, it's a matter of engagement.

"There are two things that you do on social media. One is that you're passive. You're just watching and looking at everything. The second is that you're engaged, you're putting up posts, you're involved on social media," he said.

Being engaged means you're taking part in the conversation, you're making a contribution and having a dialogue, so it becomes a meaningful exchange of ideas and opinions.

It's easier to get dejected when you're a passive watcher, when you absorb everything without knowing the full story.

"Those who see pictures of people on their trips may think they're having such a great life. It depends on a person's psychological baggage. If

of people are still on Facebook. Twitter has 255 million active users while Instagram reckons it will soon beat Twitter's numbers.

But do you really need to be on social media? According to Dr George, it's about finding out why you want to join a platform and not just jumping into it.

Ask yourself, what is your purpose? What am I bringing to it? And how am I going to benefit from it? You can claim your right to stay away if you feel that it is causing harm.

However, he worries about a growing addiction to social media.

"Generally in addiction, there is the stimulation in the reward part of your brain. In gambling, for example, you may win once in 10 years but that is enough to remind you of how good it can feel," he says.

"Similarly, if you have your reward pathways stimulated once for putting up a popular post or photo, maybe five years down the road you are still at it because you have that recollection. So there is a potential of being addicted."

How much information is too much information on social media?

It is up to you what you post online, but how comfortable are you at telling your inner struggles to people who may or may not care about them?

"It makes a big difference when you are communicating one-to-one and face-to-face," says Dr George who believes you need to set a boundary on what you share. It is different for each individual, but generally, things of a personal nature should not be on social media.

The concern is how other people may use that information against you and how mentally equipped you are at dealing with negativity. The situation is worse when there is anonymity.

PROJECTING PERFECTION

Dr George says social media is like being in a vehicle on the road.

"When you're in the car, you can be angry and shout at others from inside your car. But the moment you get out, you're a different person. So similarly here, it's as if you're protected by the fact that people can't see you, they can't check your body language so you say whatever you want."

That's the dangerous thing," he says.

There is a certain image that we like to project on social media — an ideal of how we want the world to see. Depending on the circumstances, it may seem dishonest.

"It is something that we can try to strive for," says Dr George. "But others need to know that the image is not fixed. There are downtimes in life."

Life, with its ups and downs, is far more complex than any image we project online.

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A selfie is like looking in the mirror as the image is essentially for ourselves.



WHAT DO YOU SEE?

SOME people see the selfie as the ultimate symbol of narcissism, but psychiatrist Dr Philip George believes that it can help shed light on our inadequacies.

"It's similar to looking in the mirror. When we look in the mirror, some of us go 'wow', some of us go 'yuck'. It's about trying to get that wow all the time," he explains.

"The real image is for ourselves, not others. It is us who like to see it put up and broadcast. But if we don't have inner strength, we're dependent on others to decide how we feel."

He explains that while a person's self-esteem is formed during childhood, there are ways to help adults deal with negativity.

"What we have built in our

foundation can be changed. There are ways such as cognitive therapy to change how we perceive things. You can review and change how you think but it takes time. It can take a year or more," he says.

"There are online therapy websites like E-Couch or MoodGYM and there are exercises to change how you perceive things."

Be mindful that what people post online is hardly the full story.



"You need to set a boundary on what you share."

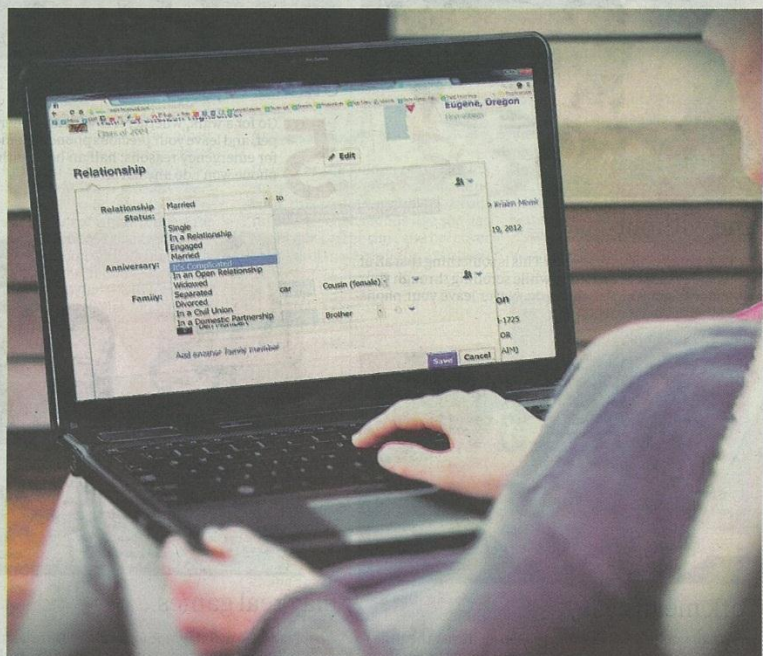
Dr Philip George

they're already anxious, always feeling down or have low self-esteem, they will get affected," said Dr George.

There are also those who seek approval from online peers and react negatively when it isn't there. There is a danger of relying excessively on such praise, especially if there is no support system outside the online community.

STEP AWAY

Amid debates on privacy issues, a lot



What image are you projecting online?