

## STATS:

## SOCIAL MEDIA & HEALTHCARE

Social media is playing an increasingly important role in how patients access health information and make decisions about their care. Many turn to online sources before consulting a healthcare professional, bringing insights, and sometimes misconceptions, into clinic visits.

Online communities and content can provide support, reduce stigma, and influence treatment decisions, but concerns around accuracy and accountability remain.

For pharma marketers, this highlights both an opportunity to educate and a responsibility to ensure trustworthy information reaches patients.



*The best source of statistics around social media usage for your strategy will come from the research you conduct in your planning as these will be specific to your audience and country.*

*However, to get you started we've collated some key stats about social media usage in healthcare.*

## People are searching online about their health

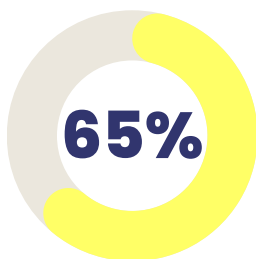
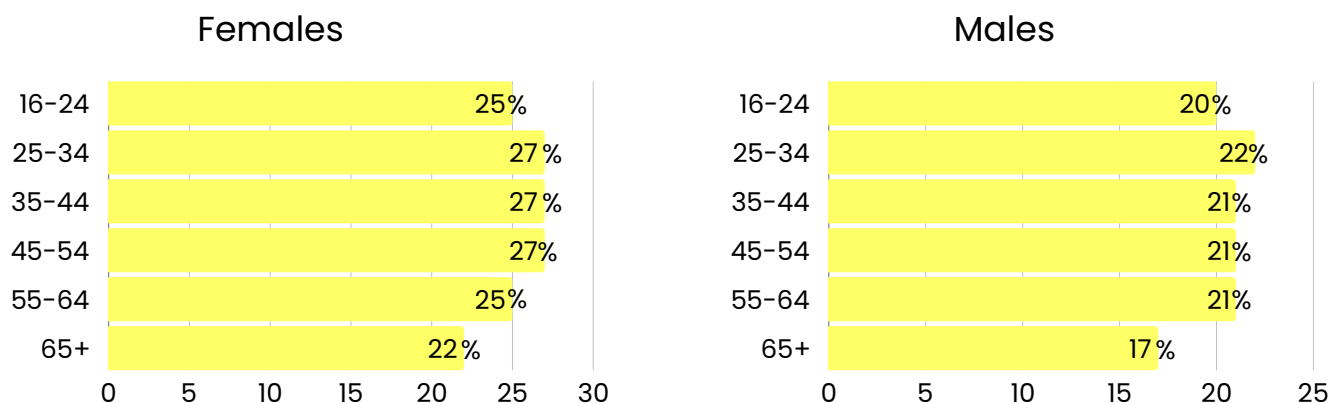
According to the July 2025 Global Snapshot Report from We Are Social and Meltwater<sup>1</sup> 35% of connected adults use the internet to research health issues and healthcare products.

# 35%

## Online health research spans every generation

The same report shows us that this is a regular activity across all age groups<sup>1</sup>.

Percentage of internet users who check health symptoms online **every week**.

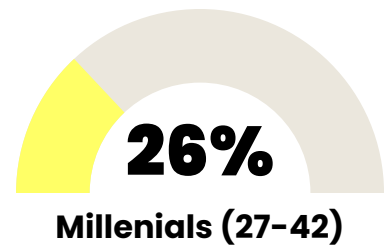
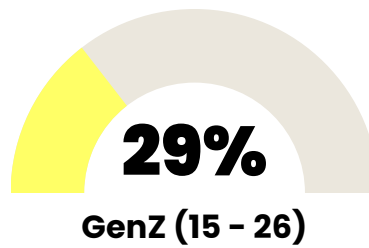


of patients turn to Google first before consulting their doctor<sup>2</sup>.



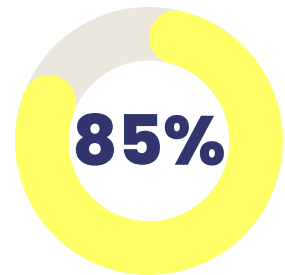
## Social media plays a key part of the healthcare journey

According to a recent EMARKETER survey, GenZers and millennials increasingly start their patient journeys on social media platforms<sup>3</sup>.



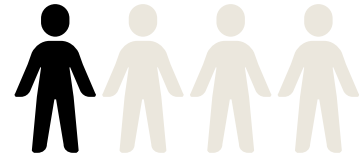
## Patients bring information from social media in to their clinic visits

A 2025 recent survey by *MedFluencers* of HCPs across 15 specialties revealed that 85% of HCPs reported that patients have mentioned social media posts during clinical visits<sup>4</sup>.

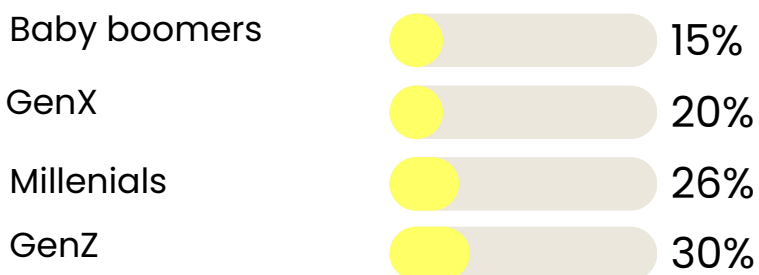


## DIY diagnosing

A recent survey of 1,000 Americans showed that nearly 1 in 4 people self-diagnosed based on information found on social media<sup>5</sup>.



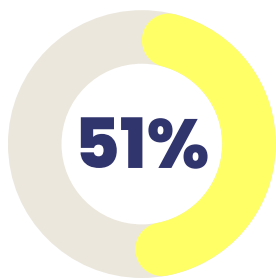
This varies by age with Gen Z as the most likely generation to self-diagnose based on social media content



Percentage who self-diagnosed based on social media (by generation)

Less than half (43%) of those who diagnosed themselves online sought a second opinion from a medical professional. Baby Boomers were the most likely to seek diagnosis confirmation, with 63% following up with a medical professional. Conversely, only 38% of Gen X sought confirmation.



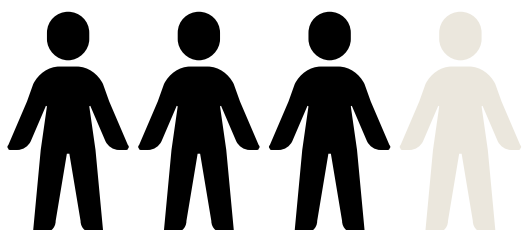


## Social media as a source of support

A ReachOut survey in Australia revealed that 51% of young people facing mental health challenges use social media as a substitute for professional support<sup>6</sup>.

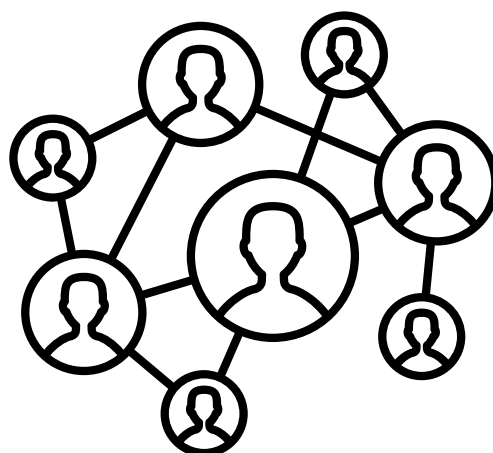
## Online communities, like those on social media, can impact treatment decisions

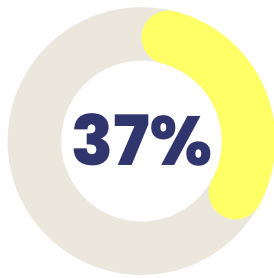
A survey of patients participating in Germany's largest prostate cancer online support group, found that almost a third of patients revised their initial treatment decision after joining the support group. Showing the significance of online health communities, like those found in closed Facebook groups, on patient decision making<sup>7</sup>.



75% of people reported that they used recommendations they found online to help them decide which medicines to buy<sup>8</sup>.

A qualitative analysis of Facebook Groups related to mental health in the UK and US found that the shared personal experiences, emotional and informational support provided within these groups had a positive impact for participants<sup>9</sup>.





of patients turn to influencers for health advice because they are easier to access than medical professionals<sup>2</sup>.

## Consumers see the benefits of medical content on social media<sup>5</sup>

Increased  
medical  
awareness  
(72%)

Reduced  
stigma of  
disease &  
illness (56%)

Encouragement  
of early  
detection (42%)

Foster  
medical  
empathy  
(38%)

## But have concerns about social media medical content<sup>5</sup>

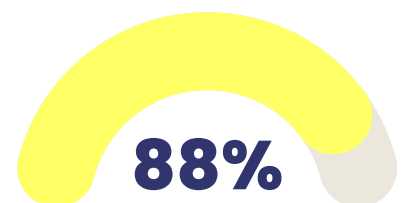
Possibility of  
misdiagnosis  
(73%)

Spread of  
inaccurate  
information  
(70%)

Lack of  
accountability  
for content  
creators (54%)

Fear-  
mongering  
(44%)

88% of people said medical-related content should carry a warning when not created by medical professionals<sup>5</sup>.



## References

1. [2025 Global Snapshot Report](#), We Are Social and Meltwater, July 2025
2. CharityRx "[The Shifting Role of Influence and Authority in the Rx Drug & Health Supplement Market](#)", September 2022
3. EMARKETER "[Generational Differences in Patients' Health Journeys](#)", September 2024
4. [MedFluencers survey](#), July 2025
5. Tebra "[Is self-diagnosis on social media helping or hurting people's health?](#)", February 2025
6. ReachOut "[How young people use social media for mental health information and support](#)"
7. Huber J, Maatz P, Muck T, Keck B, Friederich HC, Herzog W, Ihrig A. The effect of an online support group on patients' treatment decisions for localized prostate cancer: An online survey. *Urol Oncol*. 2017 Feb;35(2):37.e19-37.e28. doi: 10.1016/j.urolonc.2016.09.010. Epub 2016 Oct 31. PMID: 27810256.
8. Connecting the dots, Global Web Index, 2020.
9. Prescott J, Rathbone AL, Brown G. Online peer to peer support: Qualitative analysis of UK and US open mental health Facebook groups. *DIGITAL HEALTH*. 2020;6. doi:10.1177/2055207620979209