

[IMAGE]

Diet by Social Media

By Editorial Staff

If you're not increasingly aware of the dangers associated with excessive social media consumption, you're probably denying the reality or so consumed by it that you don't have time to think about the risks – or don't care if you do realize you have a problem. With that said, let's focus on a big problem illustrated by recent research – we'll call it *diet by social media*.

What foods and drinks do highly followed celebrities tout on social media? More often than not, it's not the healthy kind. In a study of more than 5,000 foods and beverages included in social media posts from 181 "highly followed" celebrities, a whopping 87 percent of accounts had posts that included foods / beverages on the less healthy side: alcoholic beverages, snacks, sweets, etc.

The nutritional quality of foods and beverages featured in the Instagram posts was assessed using the Nutrient Profile Index, which allocates a score from 0-100 based on sugar, sodium, energy, saturated fat, fiber, protein and fruit and/or vegetable content per 100-gram sample. A "less healthy" designation meant the food in question achieved a score below 64; for beverages, it meant achieving a score below 70.

social media - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Of the 181 celebrities whose Instagram posts were analyzed, 66 were actors, actresses, and television personalities, 64 music artists and 51 athletes. Overall, 158 celebrity accounts (87.2 percent) earned a "less healthy" total food nutrition score, while 162 (89.5 percent) earned a "less healthy" total beverage nutrition score. Interestingly, only a small percentage of posts featuring foods / beverages were sponsored by a company (4.8 percent). Findings appear in the research journal *JAMA Network Open*.

The moral to the story: Don't let your nutrition habits be shaped by social media – unless it's healthy habits, of course. How do you know the difference? That's where it gets tricky, especially when our culture is so dependent on the opinions of celebrities. Who's a better source of information on nutrition, diet, and healthy and wellness in general? Your doctor. Food (and drink) for thought...

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