# Doom scrolling fuels rising mental and physical health crises amid endless distressing news



Engaging with the news has become an integral part of our daily routine, often starting as soon as we wake up. For many, the first action is to reach for a smartphone and indulge in a dose of doom scrolling—an unsettling habit of scrolling through headlines that predominantly highlight the turmoil in the world. Whether it’s wars, economic crises, or the ever-present threat of climate change, our feeds are filled with negativity that can easily become overwhelming.

This habitual engagement is not without repercussions. According to a lecturer at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, our brains are designed to manage stress in short bursts. However, the continuous barrage of distressing news has turned this natural instinct into a chronic state of hyper-vigilance. “Our brains and bodies are expertly designed to handle short bursts of stress. But over the past several years, the stress just doesn’t seem to end,” she remarks. The amygdala, responsible for our fight-or-flight response, becomes hyperactive, leading us to compulsively check for fresh threats, exacerbating feelings of anxiety and helplessness.

A recent research review published in *Applied Quality of Life* indicated a correlation between doom scrolling and diminished mental well-being. Involving 1,200 adult participants, this study found that excessive exposure to distressing content is linked to negative outcomes in life satisfaction. Another study noted an increase in existential anxiety among those who heavily engaged in doom scrolling, hinting at a sense of impending doom regarding the future of life as we know it. Such findings reflect an alarming trend, especially as studies have shown that women are often more susceptible to these scrolling habits, likely due to their greater inclination to nurture and protect, and the often distressing nature of the content they encounter.

Aside from the mental health ramifications, doom scrolling can also lead to numerous physical ailments. Research has documented symptoms including nausea, headaches, and disrupted sleep patterns, with reports of increased blood pressure amongst those heavily engaged in consuming distressing news. The blue light emitted from screens is notably detrimental, interfering with the body’s production of melatonin and potentially leading to insomnia.

Another closely related phenomenon is what has been dubbed "zombie scrolling." This mindless habit involves scrolling through content without any real engagement or purpose, often at inappropriate times such as during meals or social gatherings, further distancing us from genuine human interaction. The allure of social media platforms perpetuates this behaviour, drawing users back into a cycle of mindless consumption. As one researcher noted, many users find themselves scrolling not only in moments of downtime but also amidst social activities, leading to profound social isolation and diminishing the quality of personal interactions.

The underlying psychological mechanics are compelling; scrolling acts like a lever for a dopamine hit, generating a fleeting sense of pleasure. Unfortunately, this dynamic creates an addictive loop—users compulsively returning for that next small thrill in a sequence of distressing narratives. Engaging in activities that do not involve screens, such as walking, swimming, or reading, can provide a reprieve and enhance well-being.

Experts recommend setting clear boundaries with technology as a crucial step towards regaining control. Keeping devices away during sleeps, curtailing notifications, and opting for designated news consumption periods can help mitigate the urge to scroll incessantly. Maintaining digital boundaries not only protects mental health but also allows for a more fulfilled and engaged life, where moments of joy and genuine connection can take precedence over the ceaseless flow of troubling news.

In a world increasingly dominated by digital interaction, understanding the psychological and physical toll of doom scrolling is vital. It offers an opportunity to re-evaluate our relationship with technology and news, steering us toward healthier habits that promote emotional stability and well-being.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/doom-scrolling-6717055-May2025/), [[2]](https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/doomscrolling-dangers)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/doomscrolling-dangers), [[3]](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/its-not-just-in-your-head/202412/the-dangers-of-doom-scrolling), [[4]](https://www.moneycontrol.com/lifestyle/anxiety-depression-and-other-negative-effects-of-doom-scrolling-article-12795856.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://mcpress.mayoclinic.org/mental-health/doom-scrolling-and-mental-health/), [[6]](https://undiknas.ac.id/en/2024/10/the-phenomenon-of-doom-scrolling-and-its-impact-on-mental-health/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://undiknas.ac.id/en/2024/10/the-phenomenon-of-doom-scrolling-and-its-impact-on-mental-health/), [[7]](https://uncovercounseling.com/blog/psychology-behind-doomscrolling/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/doom-scrolling-6717055-May2025/), [[6]](https://undiknas.ac.id/en/2024/10/the-phenomenon-of-doom-scrolling-and-its-impact-on-mental-health/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/doom-scrolling-6717055-May2025/), [[5]](https://mcpress.mayoclinic.org/mental-health/doom-scrolling-and-mental-health/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/doom-scrolling-6717055-May2025/), [[3]](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/its-not-just-in-your-head/202412/the-dangers-of-doom-scrolling)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/doom-scrolling-6717055-May2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/doomscrolling-dangers> - This article from Harvard Health discusses the physical and mental health risks associated with doomscrolling, including nausea, headaches, muscle tension, low appetite, difficulty sleeping, and elevated blood pressure. It references a 2023 research review in Applied Research in Quality of Life, which analysed three studies involving approximately 1,200 adults, suggesting that doomscrolling is linked to worse mental well-being and life satisfaction. The article also highlights a 2024 study in Computers in Human Behavior Reports, which found that doomscrolling evokes greater levels of existential anxiety.
3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/its-not-just-in-your-head/202412/the-dangers-of-doom-scrolling> - Psychology Today explores the adverse mental health effects of doomscrolling, noting that it reinforces negative thoughts and feelings, potentially worsening pre-existing depression and anxiety. The article cites a 2023 study linking doomscrolling to worse mental health and decreased overall satisfaction with life. It also discusses how doomscrolling can lead to increased stress levels, with a survey of over 1,000 participants finding that nearly 17% who admitted to 'severely problematic' news consumption reported higher stress levels and worse physical health.
4. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/lifestyle/anxiety-depression-and-other-negative-effects-of-doom-scrolling-article-12795856.html> - This article examines the negative effects of doomscrolling on mental and physical health, including increased anxiety, disrupted sleep, and impaired concentration. It highlights that constant exposure to distressing news can lead to a state of hyper-vigilance, contributing to chronic stress. The piece also discusses how doomscrolling can disrupt sleep patterns, with the blue light emitted by screens interfering with melatonin production, leading to insomnia and poor sleep quality.
5. <https://mcpress.mayoclinic.org/mental-health/doom-scrolling-and-mental-health/> - Mayo Clinic Press discusses the role of social media platforms in promoting doomscrolling, noting that unlike traditional media, social media provides constant access to negative content, creating an endless loop. The article details the effects of doomscrolling on mental and emotional health, including increased distress, sleep disruption, worsened social health, and reduced exercise. It also offers strategies to mitigate these effects, such as setting time limits, curating social media content, and prioritising healthier activities.
6. <https://undiknas.ac.id/en/2024/10/the-phenomenon-of-doom-scrolling-and-its-impact-on-mental-health/> - This article from Universitas Pendidikan Nasional outlines the impact of doomscrolling on mental health, including increased stress and anxiety, disrupted sleep patterns, worsened emotional health, and reduced productivity. It also provides strategies to overcome doomscrolling, such as limiting screen time, curating social media content, and engaging in alternative activities to reduce reliance on negative news consumption.
7. <https://uncovercounseling.com/blog/psychology-behind-doomscrolling/> - Uncover Counseling delves into the psychological aspects of doomscrolling, explaining how excessive exposure to negative news can intensify feelings of anxiety and depression. The article discusses how doomscrolling can disrupt sleep patterns, increase stress levels, and foster social isolation. It also offers advice on addressing doomscrolling through mindful media consumption and setting boundaries to protect mental health.