# More than half of top TikTok mental health videos deliver misleading advice, experts warn



A recent investigation has highlighted a troubling trend on TikTok, revealing that over half of the top 100 videos providing mental health advice on the platform are riddled with misinformation. As individuals increasingly turn to social media for guidance on mental health issues, the potential hazards of unverified advice have come to the forefront. Among the dubious recommendations identified are claims such as eating an orange in the shower to curb anxiety, as well as promoting supplements like saffron and magnesium glycinate, which lack robust evidence for efficacy in anxiety relief. Such misleading guidance can contribute to a distorted understanding of mental health conditions.

Health professionals and MPs have expressed significant concern regarding the implications of this trend. The findings of the investigation, which involved expert evaluations of videos tagged with #mentalhealthtips, revealed that 52 out of the 100 videos contained misleading information, while many others were deemed vague or overly simplistic. David Okai, a consultant neuropsychiatrist at King’s College London, pointed out that the misuse of therapeutic language within these videos can create confusion about mental illnesses, as terms like "wellbeing" and "anxiety" are often conflated.

This focus on quick-fix solutions reflects a growing challenge in the mental health discourse. Dan Poulter, a former health minister and NHS psychiatrist, noted the concerning tendency of some content to pathologise everyday emotions, instilling a sense of misdiagnosis in viewers who may equate normal feelings with serious mental health conditions. This misrepresentation can trivialise the lived experiences of those dealing with actual mental illnesses, potentially leading to further stigma and misunderstanding.

Moreover, the phenomenon is not confined to anxiety alone. A study published in March indicated that popular ADHD-related content on TikTok often fails to align with clinical guidelines, suggesting that misleading portrayals of symptoms make it difficult for viewers to accurately self-diagnose. This issue has sparked alarm among mental health professionals, who stress the importance of reliable mental health information being widely accessible. Experts argue that the complexities of conditions like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) require deep understanding and nuanced discussions, rather than superficial treatment in 30-second videos.

In the face of ongoing criticisms, TikTok asserts that it actively removes harmful misinformation and directs users to authoritative health resources, such as the NHS. However, critics highlight that algorithms employed by social media platforms can inadvertently amplify misleading information, despite attempts at moderation. Chi Onwurah, a Labour MP, indicated that ongoing government investigations into misinformation have uncovered significant flaws related to the effectiveness of the Online Safety Act, particularly regarding the algorithms that drive content recommendations.

With the risks associated with health misinformation growing, the urgency for increased oversight and regulatory measures becomes ever clearer. Paulette Hamilton, who chairs the health and social care select committee, reinforced that reliance on online tips for mental health should never replace professional, evidence-based support. The growing intersection of technology and mental health necessitates a concerted effort from both regulators and social media platforms to safeguard the public from harmful misinformation.

While social media can raise awareness about mental health issues, it is paramount that users are guided towards trustworthy sources of information. As the landscape of mental health discourse continues to evolve, the imperative for careful consumption and critical examination of the information shared online cannot be overstated.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/fa8f979c3121a3c5712d52a300c9005f)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/fa8f979c3121a3c5712d52a300c9005f), [[4]](https://neurosciencenews.com/tiktok-adhd-psychology-28496/), [[6]](https://www.healio.com/news/psychiatry/20250327/misinformation-on-tiktok-can-lead-to-misunderstanding-of-adhd-inaccurate-self-diagnosis)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2025/04/02/dr-tiktok-the-impacts-of-misinformation-on-mental-health-self-diagnosis/), [[6]](https://www.healio.com/news/psychiatry/20250327/misinformation-on-tiktok-can-lead-to-misunderstanding-of-adhd-inaccurate-self-diagnosis)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/fa8f979c3121a3c5712d52a300c9005f)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/fa8f979c3121a3c5712d52a300c9005f), [[4]](https://neurosciencenews.com/tiktok-adhd-psychology-28496/), [[5]](https://petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2025/04/02/dr-tiktok-the-impacts-of-misinformation-on-mental-health-self-diagnosis/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds> - A Guardian investigation reveals that over half of the top 100 TikTok videos offering mental health advice contain misinformation. Experts found dubious advice, such as using an orange in the shower to reduce anxiety and promoting supplements with limited evidence for alleviating anxiety. MPs and experts expressed concern over the spread of harmful mental health advice on social media and urged the government to strengthen regulations to protect the public from misinformation.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/fa8f979c3121a3c5712d52a300c9005f> - In January 2025, seven French families filed a lawsuit against TikTok France, alleging that the platform's harmful content contributed to their children's suicides. The plaintiffs accuse TikTok of failing to moderate such content effectively and maximizing profits by targeting vulnerable teenagers. TikTok claims it prohibits and removes harmful content, directing users to mental health services. Critics argue that TikTok's moderation efforts are insufficient, pointing out that harmful content can bypass detection through coded language, known as 'algospeak.'
4. <https://neurosciencenews.com/tiktok-adhd-psychology-28496/> - A study published in March 2025 found that popular ADHD-related content on TikTok often misaligns with clinical guidelines, potentially influencing how young adults perceive the disorder. Researchers analyzed the top 100 ADHD videos and found that less than half of the claims matched professional diagnostic criteria. Young adults who consumed more of this content were more likely to overestimate ADHD symptoms and recommend videos with misleading information. Experts emphasize the need for mental health professionals to engage in social media discussions to ensure accurate, evidence-based resources reach viewers.
5. <https://petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2025/04/02/dr-tiktok-the-impacts-of-misinformation-on-mental-health-self-diagnosis/> - A study published on March 19, 2025, confirmed the widespread nature of health misinformation on TikTok. Looking specifically at claims about ADHD, the study found that more than half of all claims in the videos lacked scientific accuracy. The misleading claims largely relate to describing symptoms as a basis for self-diagnosis, a concern when one in four adults suspect they have ADHD when only 6 percent of the population is estimated to actually have it. ADHD misinformation can make it seem like symptoms common to a plethora of mental health conditions like anxiety and depression are specific to ADHD.
6. <https://www.healio.com/news/psychiatry/20250327/misinformation-on-tiktok-can-lead-to-misunderstanding-of-adhd-inaccurate-self-diagnosis> - Psychologists found that fewer than half of the ADHD-symptom claims in the analyzed TikTok videos were accurate. The level of ADHD-related content viewed was linked to perceptions of ADHD prevalence and struggles. TikTok's most popular videos on ADHD are as likely to misinform viewers as they are to provide helpful hints, a new study says. More than half the claims made in the 100 most-viewed TikTok videos about attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder are not accurate, researchers reported in the journal PLOS One.
7. <https://www.medicaleconomics.com/view/1-in-4-physicians-support-a-tiktok-ban-citing-health-misinformation> - A Sermo survey reveals 23% of doctors believe banning TikTok would positively impact health care. Physicians express concern over TikTok's role in spreading health misinformation, with 23% supporting an outright ban. TikTok is identified as a significant source of misinformation, affecting patient perceptions and clinical decisions. The report, released March 28, 2025, includes responses from more than 1,100 physicians worldwide and reflects mounting frustration over the platform’s influence on patient perceptions and clinical decision-making.