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An Update on Our Work to Keep People Informed and Limit Misinformation About COVID-19

April 16, 2020

By Guy Rosen, VP Integrity



Update on May 26, 2021 at 3:30PM PT:

In light of ongoing investigations into the origin of COVID-19 and in consultation with public health experts, we will no longer remove the claim that COVID-19 is man-made or manufactured from our apps. We're continuing to work with health experts to keep pace with the evolving nature of the pandemic and regularly update our policies as new facts and trends emerge.

Update on February 8, 2021 at 10:00AM PT:

Removing More False Claims About COVID-19 and Vaccines

Today, we are expanding our efforts to remove false claims on Facebook and Instagram about COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines and vaccines in general during the pandemic. Since December, we've removed false claims about COVID-19 vaccines that have been debunked by public health experts. Today, following consultations with leading health organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), we are expanding the list of false claims we will remove to include additional debunked claims about the coronavirus and vaccines. This includes claims such as:

- COVID-19 is man-made or manufactured
- Vaccines are not effective at preventing the disease they are meant to protect against
- It's safer to get the disease than to get the vaccine
- Vaccines are toxic, dangerous or cause autism

The full list of claims is available [here](#), and we already [prohibit these claims](#) in ads. These new policies will help us continue to take aggressive action against misinformation about COVID-19 and vaccines.

We will begin enforcing this policy immediately, with a particular focus on Pages, groups and accounts that violate these rules, and we'll continue to expand our enforcement over the coming weeks. Groups, Pages and accounts on Facebook and Instagram that repeatedly share these debunked claims may be removed altogether. We are also requiring some admins for groups with admins or members who have violated our COVID-19 policies to temporarily approve all posts within their group. Claims about COVID-19 or vaccines that do not violate these policies will still be eligible for review by our third-party fact-checkers, and if they are rated false, they will be labeled and demoted.

Finally, we are continuing to improve Search results on our platforms. When people search for vaccine or COVID-19 related content on Facebook, we promote relevant, authoritative results and provide third-party resources to connect people to expert information about vaccines. On Instagram, in addition to surfacing authoritative results in Search, in the coming weeks we're making it harder to find accounts in search that discourage people from getting vaccinated.

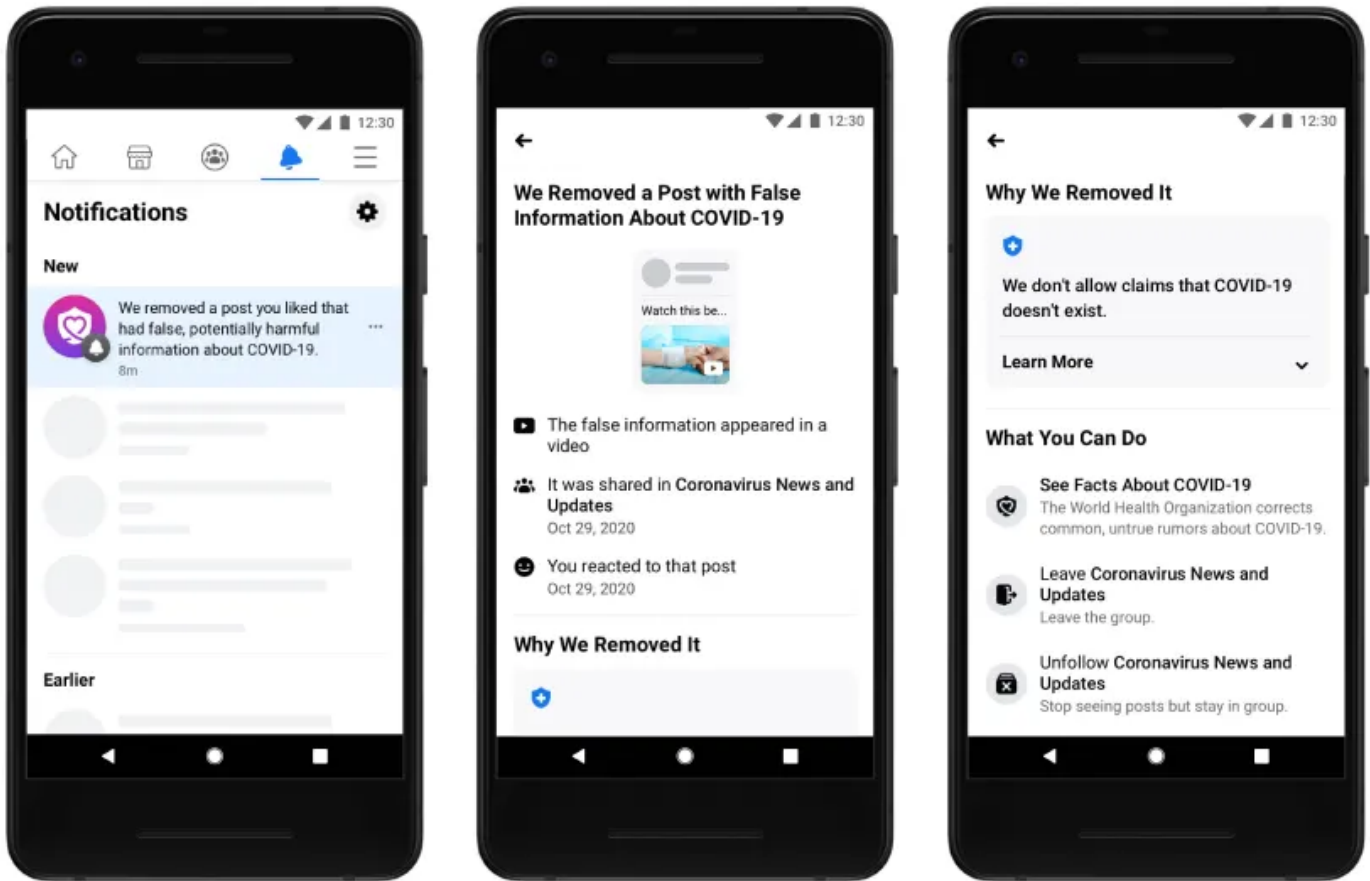
[As we noted last month](#) in response to guidance from the Oversight Board, we are committed to providing more transparency around these policies. You can read the detailed updates in Facebook's [Community Standards](#) and in our [Help Center](#). As the situation evolves, we'll continue to review content on our platforms, assess trends in language and engage with experts to provide additional policy guidance to keep people safe during this crisis.

Update on December 15, 2020 at 7:00PM PT:

Today, we're updating the messages we send to people who have interacted with misinformation about COVID-19 on Facebook that we've since removed. In April, we started showing these messages in News Feed to people who liked, commented on or reacted to posts with misinformation that we removed for violating our policy. Since then, we've done research to better understand what's most helpful for people, and we've redesigned these as more personalized notifications to more clearly connect people with credible and accurate information about COVID-19.

Now, people will:

- Receive a notification that says we've removed a post they've interacted with for violating our policy against misinformation about COVID-19 that leads to imminent physical harm.
- Once they click on the notification, they will see a thumbnail of the post, and more information about where they saw it and how they engaged with it.
- They will also see why it was false and why we removed it (e.g. the post included the false claim that COVID-19 doesn't exist)
- People will then be able to see more facts about COVID-19 in our [Coronavirus Information Center](#), and take other actions such as unfollowing the Page or Groups that shared this content.



Update on May 12, 2020 at 9:30AM PT:

During the month of April, we put warning labels on about 50 million pieces of content related to COVID-19 on Facebook, based on around 7,500 articles by our independent fact-checking partners.

Originally published April 16, 2020 at 6:00AM PT:

Ever since COVID-19 was declared a global public health emergency in January, we've been working to connect people to accurate information from health experts and keep harmful misinformation about COVID-19 from spreading on our apps.

We've now directed over 2 billion people to resources from the WHO and other health authorities through our COVID-19 Information Center and pop-ups on Facebook and Instagram with over 350 million people clicking through to learn more.

But connecting people to credible information is only half the challenge. Stopping the spread of misinformation and harmful content about COVID-19 on our apps is also critically important. That's why we work with over 60 fact-checking organizations that review and rate content in more than 50 languages around the world. In the past month, we've continued to grow our program to add more partners and languages. Since the beginning of March, we've added eight new partners and expanded our coverage to more than a dozen new countries. For example, we added MyGoPen in Taiwan, the AFP and dpa in the Netherlands, Reuters in the UK, and others.

To further support the work of our fact-checking partners during this time, we recently announced the first round of recipients of our \$1 million grant program in partnership with the International Fact-Checking Network. We've given grants to 13 fact-checking organizations around the world to support projects in Italy, Spain, Colombia, India, the Republic of Congo, and other nations. We will announce additional recipients in the coming weeks.

Once a piece of content is rated false by fact-checkers, we reduce its distribution and show warning labels with more context. Based on one fact-check, we're able to kick off similarity detection methods that identify duplicates of debunked stories. For example, during the month of March, we displayed warnings on about 40 million posts related to COVID-19 on Facebook, based on around 4,000 articles by our independent fact-checking partners. When people saw those warning labels, 95% of the time they did not go on to view the original content. To date, we've also removed hundreds of thousands of pieces of misinformation that could lead to imminent physical harm. Examples of misinformation we've removed include harmful claims like drinking bleach cures the virus and theories like physical distancing is ineffective in preventing the disease from spreading.

Today we're sharing some additional steps we're taking to combat COVID-19 related misinformation and make sure people have the accurate information they need to stay safe.

Informing People Who Interacted With Harmful COVID-19 Claims

We're going to start showing messages in News Feed to people who have liked, reacted or commented on harmful misinformation about COVID-19 that we have since removed. These messages will connect people to COVID-19 myths debunked by the

WHO including ones we've removed from our platform for leading to imminent physical harm. We want to connect people who may have interacted with harmful misinformation about the virus with the truth from authoritative sources in case they see or hear these claims again off of Facebook. People will start seeing these messages in the coming weeks.

Making It Easier for People to Get the Facts

To make it easier for people to find accurate information about COVID-19, we recently added a new section to our COVID-19 Information Center called Get the Facts. It includes fact-checked articles from our partners that debunk misinformation about the coronavirus. The fact-check articles are selected by our News curation team and updated every week. This is now available in the US. We will soon add it to Facebook News in the US as well.

As this pandemic evolves, we'll continue focusing on the most effective ways to keep misinformation and dangerous hoaxes about COVID-19 off our apps and ensure people have credible information from health experts to stay safe and informed.

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We're announcing steps to promote reliable information on our apps about the COVID-19 vaccine for children.

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