
Internet Safety

Last year 1 in 5 young Internet users received unwanted sexual solicitation online.

By educating yourself and your children, you can help make the internet a safe and valuable tool for your family. The most important thing you can do is to pay close attention to your children and encourage them to confide in you. They should know that you will be calm and protective if they tell you about something that has frightened or disturbed them.

Tips to help protect your children online:

- Teach kids not to give out personal info (last name, address, phone #).
- Make sure your kids know NOT to agree to face-to-face meetings with someone they met online.
- Instruct your kids to never respond to emails or chat messages that make them feel uncomfortable.
- Surf the internet WITH your kids.
- Place the computer in a public room.
- Establish ground rules for your kids' internet usage.
- Learn how to use parental controls and archiving features.
- Take care with what photos you post or upload.
- Keep usernames anonymous.
- NEVER post anything you wouldn't want the public at large to know or see.

Sexting?

Sexting is the sending of sexually explicit photos, images, text messages or e-mails with a cell phone or other mobile device.

Why do teens sext?

They might be trying to impress a crush or be funny. They might be willing to send them to a boyfriend/girlfriend who requested them.

What are the consequences of sexting?

Broken trust between parties, and sexting sets the risk for reoccurring embarrassment, exploitation, victimization, and can affect their emotional and psychological development.

What can I do to help prevent my child from sexting?

Set rules for internet and phone use. Talk to them early about how digital info and images may travel far and they can lose complete control of what happens to it.

Tips to Prevent Sexting

- Think about the consequences.
- Never take images you wouldn't want the public to see.
- Before hitting "send" remember you lose control of where it goes.
- If you forward a picture of someone, you lose their trust.

To Contact Us

HCWC

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Child Abuse Awareness and Internet Safety



A Parent's Guide by Roxanne's House Children's Advocacy Center



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What is Abuse?

Abuse happens in multiple forms. The common factor in each form of abuse is the perpetrator's ability to **GAIN POWER AND CONTROL**.

Sexual abuse — any sexual act between an adult and a child through penetration, intercourse, incest, rape, oral sex, or sodomy

Physical abuse — an injury resulting from physical aggression, even if the injury was not intended

Emotional/Psychological abuse — a pattern of behavior by parents or caregivers that can seriously interfere with a child's cognitive, emotional, psychological or social development (ignoring, rejecting, isolating, or verbally assaulting)

Neglect — a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene or supervision.

Myths and Facts

Myth #1 — Most child abusers are strangers.

Most abusers are family members or others close to the family.

Myth #2 — Children lie or make up stories about sexual abuse.

It is extremely rare that a child would create stories or fantasies about being sexually abused.

Myth #3 — Child abuse doesn't happen in "good" families.

It happens across all racial, economic and cultural lines.

1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will have a sexually abusive or sexually exploitative experience by the time they are 18 years old.

85-95% of victims knew their offenders prior to the assault.

Talking About Their Bodies

| | Behaviors: | To Do: |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Infancy (Ages 0-2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curiosity about their body - Touching their genitals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach correct names of body parts, such as penis or vagina - Explain basic information about the difference between males and females - Provide simple answers |
| Early Childhood (Ages 2-5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Masturbation occurs as soothing behavior - Playful exploration with same age children - Show curiosity in adult bodies - May ask where babies come from | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide basic info about reproduction - Explain the difference between unwanted and wanted touch - Teach boundaries and state that their bodies belong to them |
| Middle Childhood (Age 5-8) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May act in "gendered" manner, typical of what is the norm for a boy or girl - Explore sexuality and bodies with same and opposite sex friends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote a solid understanding of gender and gender identity - Explain basic human reproduction - Educate on personal rights related to sexuality |
| Late Childhood (Ages 9-12) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase need for privacy and independence - Curiosity about adult bodies by looking for media with sexual content - Masturbation becomes clearer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide ongoing info about puberty - Provide age-appropriate sexuality info (behaviors and STIs) - Encourage healthy relationships |

Reporting and Responding

When responding to an outcry, your first responsibility after recognizing any form of abuse is to report your suspicions.

Two Ways to Report:

1. Call the Abuse Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week nationwide at **1-800-252-5400**; **for emergencies call 911.**
2. Report on The Department of Family & Protective Services website: **TxAbuseHotline.org.**
 - *A reporter's identity remains confidential.*
 - *Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a Class B misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$2,000.*
 - *The law does not require the person reporting to be certain that the child is being abused or neglected before reporting, only to have a reason for believing it.*

Tips for Responding to a Child's Outcry

Do's

- Do let the child tell his/her story.
- Do show empathy.
- Do use active listening skills.
- Do report your suspicions.
- Do ask open-ended questions (How did that happen to you? When did it happen? Can you tell me more about it?).
- Do tell the child that some things cannot be secrets because "we have to get help."
- Do remember you are only protecting the child by reporting your suspicions.
- Do provide comfort and say you believe them and that it's not their fault.
- Do take responsibility for making the report yourself.

Don'ts

- Don't try to investigate.
- Don't confront the abuser.
- Don't ask leading questions (did someone hit you? Did Mommy/ Daddy burn you? Was it last week?).
- Don't promise the child that you will keep a secret about the abuse.