

Internet Safety Tools for Parents

What can parents of 13- to 15-year-old children do to help keep them safe?

Technology

- Use parental controls on your computer.
- Have regular discussions with your adolescent about safety considerations with regard to technology.

Important discussions to have

Online behaviour

- Discuss with your adolescent how activity online leaves a trace, so it is important to be mindful of what s/he is doing.
- Reinforce the public nature of the Internet and explain to your adolescent how easily information shared can be misused by others (i.e. sending private information shared with one person to someone it is not intended for).
- Explain to your adolescent that once a picture is sent online, s/he loses control of what is done with it. Pictures may never be completely removed from the Internet.
- Although adolescents can appear as though they can handle things, they require and unconsciously seek adult guidance and supervision.
- Explain to your adolescent where it is appropriate for her/him to have privacy — for example confiding in close friends face to face, writing in a journal, being in the privacy of her/his bedroom, etc.
- Discuss with your adolescent the concept of dignity and self-respect and how it can be preserved or destroyed by messages sent online.
- Teach your adolescent that it is illegal for people to manufacture, possess or distribute naked or sexually explicit pictures of children under 18 years of age.
- Reinforce to your adolescent the importance of protecting her/his friends' and family's personal information and pictures. This should apply even when s/he is upset with a friend or family member.
- Encourage your adolescent to be a leader and not to forward messages or pictures of others that s/he may receive.



Internet Safety Tools for Parents (cont'd)

Contact with others

- Explain that it is illegal for adults to offer gifts or money to them in exchange for sexual pictures.
- Explain that it is illegal to threaten someone online or offline. If someone threatens her/him, s/he needs to tell a safe adult.
- Explain that there is no need or urgency to respond to any messages. Teach her/him not to respond to messages that make her/him feel uncomfortable.
- Discuss with your adolescent the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Adolescents should never meet someone in person that they first met online without an accompanying parent.
- Discuss with your adolescent high-risk behaviour both online and offline and create 'what if' scenarios together to help her/him anticipate dangerous situations and possible solutions.
- Teach your adolescent how to get out of relationships.
- Encourage open communication and be conscious of your adolescent's sensitivity to social judgment. S/he may be hesitant to share personal experiences.

Content online

- Adolescents have access to vast amounts of information online. This offers incredible opportunity, but it also offers exposure to explicit and harmful content. Talk openly about the hidden negative messages that may be found online (e.g. the glorification of violence, sexual harm, power and control, and gender stereotypes).
- Provide a standard of measure about healthy relationships and healthy sexuality that your adolescent can compare to when trying to make sense of media messages.
- Encourage your adolescent to think critically about information rather than assuming it is an accurate representation.

