

Warning Signs



Encourage open lines of communication

It is important for parents to encourage open lines of communication so children are not afraid to talk about inappropriate incidents or solicitations.

Be aware of the warning signs

Children should beware of personal questions about themselves, their body, who lives with them, whether or not they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc. These are warning signs that the conversation is becoming inappropriate, and the child should end the conversation immediately.

Your child is spending too much time online

If your child is spending more time than usual on the computer, find out why.

Your child suddenly stops going online

If your child is spending less time on the computer than usual, it could be a sign that something inappropriate or uncomfortable has happened. Question your child in an understanding and supportive manner.

Online friendships

If you know your child has developed a friendship with someone they met online, it is very important for parents to talk to their child and find out everything they can about that person and the particulars of the friendship.



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Feelings of shame and embarrassment

Many children won't report an inappropriate incident because they are ashamed, embarrassed, afraid, shocked or don't know what to do. They don't tell their friends for fear of looking foolish

Fear

Some children don't talk to their parents about inappropriate incidences or situations for fear their access to the Internet will be restricted or fear of looking foolish.

Distress

A child or teenager exposed to inappropriate sexual material, solicitation or contact may suffer varying levels of distress following the episode. It is important that the child is encouraged to talk about the incident to a parent, family member, teacher or counselor in order to reduce the risk of further trauma from the experience.

Never blame your child

Young Kids will be much less traumatized by an incident if their parents are supportive. Under no circumstances should you ever blame your child if they come to you and report a sexual solicitation. Sexual perpetrators are experts at manipulating their victims and it is their goal to gain your child's trust and support. It is not your child's fault.



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Prevention Tips



Dont let the computer be a babysitter

Spend as much time together as a family as possible. Spend time enjoying the computer together and take note of these prevention tips.

Set up the computer in common areas

Rather than in your child's bedroom to easily monitor activity and the amount of time spent on the Internet

Talk

Discuss openly about potential dangers on the Internet.

Tell

Inform younger children, there are "bad" things and "bad" people online just as there are in the offline world.

Be cautious at all times

Young teenagers are at an especially vulnerable developmental stage, and may seek the comfort and emotional support of an online friendship or relationship. It is important for parents to remind teens that some people they meet online will have ulterior motives and hidden agendas. They need to understand that sexual predators will initially try to earn their trust by listening to their problems, giving them attention and making them feel special. No matter how innocent the support seems, teens need to be cautious at all times about the information they provide and the direction of the relationship.



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Advise

Advise your child to be cautious about “chat” rooms. Chat rooms are where the most risk and danger is found and where sexual predators typically begin to “groom” their victims by establishing a relationship and gaining their trust. If your child is engaging in chat room conversations, find out who your child is talking to, and guard them against ever giving out personal information.

Monitor

Regularly monitor what your child is doing on the Internet. Look at the screen and check to see what your child is doing; check the history function on your computer to see what sites your child is accessing.

Be Specific

Be specific about what your child may and may not access; set consequences for access to inappropriate sites.

Limit

Limit the amount of time your child spends on the Internet; have your child obtain your permission before signing on.



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Internet Safety & Education

Protect yourself
when you're online!

Netsmartz

<http://www.netsmartz.org>

Netsmartz Teens

<http://www.nsteens.org/>

Netsmartz Kids

<http://www.netsmartzkids.org/>



Report incidents

In order to make the Internet a safer place, parents and children are encouraged to report incidents of sexual encounters, propositions, discussions and materials. Parents should contact their local law enforcement agency, Internet Service Provider and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline at <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

Website Blocking sites

Consumer Reports reviews blocking and filtering software. Click here to read the reviews:

Cyber Patrol

<http://www.cyberpatrol.com/>

CyberSitter

<http://www.cybersitter.com/>

NetNanny

<http://www.netnanny.com/>



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