

Employee Assistance Program

Internet Safety Tips for Kids

The internet is a wonderful resource that provides access to information and tools to learn, communicate and participate in activities from the comfort of your own home. However, with the wide array of accessible information, it may be easy to lose sight of what is out there and how your children might be stumbling upon information they shouldn't be. There are a few things that you as a parent should be aware of when it comes to your kids' time online.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) protect kids younger than 13 when they're online. It is designed to keep anyone from getting a child's personal information without a parent knowing about it and agreeing to it first. This law also prohibits a site from requiring a child to provide more personal information than necessary to play a game or enter a contest.

Online tools let you control your kids' access to adult material and help protect them from Internet predators. Many Internet service providers (ISPs) provide parent-control options. You can also get software that helps block access to sites and restricts personal information from being sent online.

While blocking adult or inappropriate materials is good practice, it is also important to educate your kids on safe internet use.

- Follow the family rules, and those set by the Internet service provider.
- Never post or trade personal pictures.
- Never reveal personal information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location.
- Use only a screen name and don't share passwords (other than with parents).
- Never agree to get together in person with anyone met online without parent approval and/or supervision.
- Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text.
- Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary or hurtful.

Basic guidelines for parental supervision:

- Talk openly and frequently to your kids about what they are doing online and the websites they are visiting.
- Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
- Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets.
- Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access.
- Check your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes, or any place where kids could use a computer without your supervision.
- Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.

It's important to talk to your kids to make sure they will turn to you when they have problems online. Taking an active role in your kids' Internet activities helps ensure that they benefit from them without being exposed to the potential dangers.

For more information on this topic or further assistance, please contact your Employee Assistance Program.

Ben-Joseph, E. P., MD. (2018, April). Internet Safety. Retrieved May 14, 2018, from <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/net-safety.html>



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