

E safety Update



March 2018

1. Teen sexting may be more common than you think

At least one in four teens are receiving sexually explicit texts and emails, and at least one in seven are sending sexts, a new study suggests.

Sexting can be a healthy way for young people to explore sexuality and intimacy when it's consensual, said lead study author Sheri Madigan of the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute and the University of Calgary in Canada. The trouble is that when it's coerced, or when sexts are shared without permission, it can feel a lot like cyberbullying, with many of the same dangerous mental health consequences.

More than one in 10 teens are forwarding these sexts without consent, the study found. And roughly one in 12 teens have had sexts they sent shared without their permission.

"Today's teens often do not separate their online and offline lives - it is all the same to them," Madigan said by email. "This is hard for parents to grasp."

Most teens don't report sexting at all, and those who do send or receive sexually explicit messages, videos or images tend to be older, researchers report in JAMA Pediatrics.

Researchers examined data on sexting habits from 39 previously published studies with a total of 110,380 teens. Participants were 15 years old on average, although they ranged in age from about 12 to 17.

Because kids today typically have a smartphone by the time they're 10 years old, parents should address sexting as part of any early conversations they have with kids about practicing safe sex and protecting their privacy online, Madigan advised.

"It can be helpful for parents to think about sexting in the same way they think about sex," said Elizabeth Englander, author of an accompanying editorial and director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University.

Rather than forbid sexting outright, parents should be teaching children to consider the consequences of doing it and help kids understand how to resist pressure to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, Englander said by email.

"Youth think of adults as worriers and as over-estimating risk, particularly when technology is involved, and many will tune out adults who just tell them 'don't do this,'" said Lisa Jones, a researcher at the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire in Durham.

"But sexting can be risky, and certainly nonconsensual sharing of explicit images is hurtful and even potentially criminal," Jones, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

The study wasn't a controlled experiment designed to prove whether or how sexting might cause health problems for teens. Another drawback is that many of the smaller studies in the analysis used different definitions of sexting that made it difficult to determine how often teens are sharing explicit words, videos or photos.

Link: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-teens-sexting/teen-sexting-may-be-more-common-than-you-think-idUKKCN1GB1XF>

2. Social media firms ‘must do more to tackle cyber-bullying’

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Social media platforms are failing to effectively tackle cyber-bullying, a new report claims. Technology companies were accused of offering a “tokenistic” response to the problem as MPs and leading charities warned that shortcomings are placing youngsters’ mental health at risk. Cyber-bullying takes a number of forms – including mass “unfollowings”, sharing of embarrassing photos and threatening or intimidating messages, the study found. It highlighted how children and young people are using social media for hours every day, often across multiple profiles. A survey of 1,089 respondents aged 11 to 25 found almost one in ten admitted logging on after midnight every night.

Describing their views on social media usage in an evidence session, one youngster said “it’s almost like a drug”, while another said: “Nobody really goes out anymore.” A 15-year-old-girl said: “You kind of expect to experience it: nasty comments on the selfie, Facebook posts and Twitter posts, people screen-grabbing your Snapchat story to laugh about it... I feel like it’s something people don’t take seriously.” Conservative MP Alex Chalk, who led the inquiry alongside charities The Children’s Society and YoungMinds, said: “Cyber-bullying can devastate young lives, but to date the response from social media companies has been tokenistic and inadequate. It has failed to grip the true scale of the problem. For too long they have been marking their own homework and it’s time they become far more transparent, robust and accountable.”

the paper said: “The evidence relating to the impact that cyber-bullying has on children’s mental health and wellbeing is in its infancy – but we do know that there is emerging evidence that draws links between the two.”

The analysis welcomed positive initiatives adopted by social media firms to tackle abusive content, such as the use of algorithms. It also called on the government to require platforms to publish data about their response to reported episodes of bullying. Matthew Reed, chief executive of The Children’s Society, said: “The inquiry has heard from young people describing cyber-bullying as ‘inescapable’ and in the most extreme cases it has pushed some to the verge of suicide.” Sarah Brennan of YoungMinds said the inquiry “has shown loud and clear that it’s time social media companies sit up and take action”.

Link: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/social-media-firms-must-do-more-to-tackle-cyber-bullying-1-4696404>

For more information about e safety :

- go to <http://www.blackpoolaspireacademy.co.uk>
- come into school and talk to a member of Student Services