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Safety Tips by Age - 14-17-year olds

It is common that younger teens may experience periods of low self esteem, seek the approval of their friends, and be less willing to accommodate their parents' expectations. Older teenagers need both group identity and independence, and tend to reconcile their family and peer values. In late adolescence kids also mature and are ready to interact with the world on an intellectual level. Generally, all teens are open to new ideas but lack the life experience to judge their validity.

Teens download music, use instant messaging (IM), e-mail, and play online games. They also actively use search engines to find information on the Internet. Most of them visited chat rooms, and many have participated in adult or private chat. Boys in this age group are more likely to push the boundaries - looking for gross humour, gore, gambling, or explicit adult sites.

14- to 17-Year-olds:

- are more critical and selective in their media interests and activities
- are more likely to receive unwanted sexual comments online
- receive the highest percentage of pornographic spam
- are interested in building relationships with online acquaintances (especially true of girls)
- are more likely to be asked for a real-life meeting by an online acquaintance and more apt to accept
- are still vulnerable to online marketers who encourage them to give out personal information through surveys, contests and registration forms
- (boys in particular) may look for porn sites
- may be bullied or be bullying others online
- are more likely to use credit cards online
- may be experimenting with online gambling

Safety tips

- Create a list of Internet house rules with your teens. You should include the kinds of sites that are off limit.
- Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area and out of your teens' bedrooms.

- Talk to them about their online friends and activities just as you would about their other activities.
- Know which chat rooms or message boards your teens visit, and whom they talk to. Encourage them to use monitored chat rooms.
- Talk to your teens about their IM list and make sure they're not talking to strangers.
- Insist that they tell you first if they want to meet an "online friend."
- Teach your teens never to give out personal information without your permission when using e-mail, chat rooms or instant messaging, filling out registration forms and personal profiles, and entering online contests.
- Encourage your teens to come to you if they come across material or messages that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened. (Stay calm. If you "freak out" they won't turn to you for help when they need it.)
- Talk to your teenagers about online pornography and direct them to good sites about health and sexuality.
- Insist they stay in public chat room areas.
- Help protect them from spam. Tell your teens not to give out their e-mail address online, not to respond to junk mail, and to use e-mail filters.
- Be aware of the Web sites that your teens frequent, and make sure the sites don't contain personal photos and information or offensive content.
- Teach your kids responsible online behaviour. File-sharing and taking text, images or artwork from the Web may infringe on copyright laws.
- Talk to them about ethical behaviour. They should not be using the Internet to spread gossip, bully or threaten others.
- Make sure your teens check with you before making financial transactions online, including ordering, buying or selling items.
- Discuss gambling and its potential risks and remind your teens that it is illegal for them to gamble online.

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