

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: WHAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD **NEED TO KNOW**

Today's teenagers are very active online. They are familiar with social media, creating, commenting on and sharing content — possibly interacting with people they may not know. Many have their own phone. Most teens are navigating the online world on their own, but it is not without its dangers.

There have always been people who prey on youth — the difference is the internet allows them to do it anonymously and from a distance. It's a growing problem across Canada. Parents need to be aware of how to protect children from online child sexual exploitation and teach them to recognize potential risks and stay safe.

WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW

To stay safe online, your child should be aware of the following issues:

- Online grooming
- Sexual images and videos
- Sexting and sextortion

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is grooming?

Grooming is when someone builds trust with a child, and sometimes the adults around them, to gain access to and control the child.

Online tactics a groomer might use:

- Your child is approached — they may falsely identify themselves to make a connection as a peer, or it can be someone they know
- They talk about your child's friends or interests, give gifts and compliments
- They make promises of a better life, a loving relationship or future gifts, money, drugs or alcohol
- They cause division saying "your parents are too strict" or "don't understand you"
- They sexualize the relationship by sending or asking for your child to record and send sexualized images or videos
- They may threaten or pressure your child to do what they ask
- They may ask to meet your child in person

Signs your child may be in the process of being groomed:

- They talk about a new friend you haven't heard of before
- They are very focused on spending more time online
- They have new things you didn't get them (e.g. toys, devices, video games, new apps or video game upgrades)
- They are more secretive than usual when you are around
- They use sexual language they haven't before
- They are more fragile, moody or troubled than usual (even for a teenager)

What is sextortion?

Sextortion (sex extortion) is a type of blackmail where someone threatens to send a sexual image or video of your child to friends, family or other people if they don't pay them, provide more sexual content or do what they ask.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The most important thing is to be aware and to talk openly and regularly with your child:

- Let them know you are available to talk any time
- Understand they may be hesitant to share information with you
- Use real life examples they can relate to that aren't about them
- Talk about online safety, privacy, establishing boundaries, healthy relationships and consent
- Talk to them about not giving in to pressure and breaking off communication if they feel threatened or uncomfortable
- Tell them it's always okay to come to you or another safe adult, even if they think they've made a mistake
- Tell them about resources like [Cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca) and [NeedHelpNow.ca](https://www.needhelpnow.ca) in case they are worried and do not want to come to you

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