

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

Children are spending more time online than ever before. It's where they go to play, learn, socialize and be entertained. As your child gets older and spends more unsupervised time online, it can open the door to dangers.



There have always been people who prey on children — 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 how to stay safe.

RISKS YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF

Sexual images and videos

Children can easily be exposed to graphic and potentially harmful sexual content while watching videos, visiting websites, conducting searches or playing games online. If they do, they should know that pornography does not depict healthy relationships and it is normal to feel uncomfortable seeing it.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds trust with a child, and sometimes the adults around them, to gain access to and control the child. It can be a stranger or someone your child knows. They sexualize the relationship by talking about sex or asking for images or videos. They may threaten or pressure your child into doing what they ask, or even to meet in person.

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 your child doesn't pay them, do what they ask or provide more sexual content. The perpetrator can be a stranger or someone your child knows.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Talk openly and honestly with your child

It's the best way to reduce the risks for your child. Here are some tips:

- Start having real conversations with them from an early age
- Make these talks part of daily routines like meals or bedtime
- Let them know you are available to talk any time
- Ask open-ended questions and really listen to their answers
- Take an interest in things they like — including what they do online
- Show them how to have a conversation — share your own thoughts and feelings
- 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

Some topics you may want to talk about include:

- Keeping personal information like your location, schedule or contact information private
- Not trusting everything they read, see or watch online
- That some people including adults are not safe to be around
- The risks of sharing pictures or videos of themselves
- Not accepting gifts or meeting people without talking to you first
- That they can always say no and stop talking to someone online for any reason
- That it's always okay to come to you or another safe adult — they won't be in trouble
- That, even if they don't want to talk, you are there for them if they need you

Be aware and involved

- Supervise younger children when they are online
- Be involved or take an interest in what your child is doing online
- Know who they are interacting with online
- Set up parental controls, use filtering software and set limits on your child's use of devices
- Discourage use or playing of games, apps, music and videos with age recommendations older than your child
- Encourage strong passwords and use of privacy settings where appropriate
- Look for changes in mood, online habits, social behaviour, eating or sleeping habits or use of sexual language that may indicate someone has or is trying to take advantage of them

LEARN MORE AT [CANADA.CA/CHILDEXPLOITATION](https://canada.ca/childexploitation)