

Talking to Your Kids About Pornography — Tip Sheet

It is natural for adolescents to be curious about sex: MediaSmarts' research suggests that one in ten grades 7- 11 students use the Internet to look for information about sexuality. Forty percent of boys look for pornography online, with 28% looking for it daily or weekly. The problem with pornography is that it is an unhealthy response to a healthy concern.

- **Talk to your kids about sex from a very early age.** Kids are being exposed to sexual images in various media so you need to establish an open and honest dialogue with them so they will come to you with their questions.
- **Have an ongoing dialogue:** The best approach for tweens and teens is to acknowledge that their interest in relationships and sex is normal, and help them develop the critical thinking skills they need to make good online decisions.
- **Discuss the sexual messages in various media.** Help your kids understand the harmful effects of images that degrade and exploit women or girls, or that pressure boys to conform to a male-gendered model centred on sexual attractiveness and prowess.
- **Direct your kids to good-quality information:** If the only information your kids are receiving about sexuality is from porn sites, you have a problem. There are a lot of great websites that provide information for youth on sexuality and health, such as Sexualityandu.ca, from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Explore with them the differences between normal, healthy sexual expression and the exploitive activity that is so prevalent online.
- **Establish clear rules about visiting pornographic sites:** MediaSmarts' research shows that if there is a rule in the house about what kinds of sites are appropriate to visit, kids are less likely to look for porn and those that do, do it less often. (Keep in mind that computer-savvy kids know how to erase their Internet tracks: open, honest communication is always preferable to invading their privacy.)