



ACPeds Parent Talk

Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health

New Study: 15%-25% of Teens are Sexting

According to recent [research](#) (1) published in the *JAMA Pediatrics*, the pediatric journal of the American Medical Association, at least 1 in 4 teens are receiving sexually explicit texts and emails, and at least 1 in 7 are sending them.

Sexting is when people send sexually explicit images or messages via text to someone else. Sexting is often done consensually when one teen takes a picture of him/herself and sends it to a girl/boyfriend.

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
 ENGAGE IN **SEXTING**
ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE
IN OTHER **RISKY** SEXUAL ACTIVITY.

However, sexting can also be done without someone's permission. In fact, "sexting" without permission is a common theme in teen shows and movies. In the popular teen show on Netflix, *13 Reasons Why*, the main character is ostracized, bullied, sexually harassed and even sexually assaulted as a result of a sexually explicit text that was shared with classmates all over the school and she eventually commits suicide at the end of the show.

While this may be a made-up, exaggerated story for the sake of television, the end result is not that far-fetched. **Once the photos or messages are sent, there is nothing stopping these images from being shared.** In addition, if a teen is found to be in possession of sexually explicit photos of a minor, **he or she could be charged with possession of child pornography and labeled as a sex offender for the rest of his or her life.**

IMPACTS OF SEXTING ON TEENS



Social consequences such as humiliation or cyberbullying can damage a teen's self-image and could possibly lead to depression, self-harm, and other mental health issues.



Sexually explicit photos or texts can be classified as child pornography. In some states, a teen could face felony charges for texting explicit photos or even have to register as a sex offender.



Photos and posts can continue to haunt someone for years to come. More than ever colleges and employers check online profiles looking for indications of a candidate's suitability or giant red flags about bad judgment and immaturity.

Please, talk with your teens about the psychological and emotional distress that sexting can cause. Talk to your children about how easy it is for someone to share the images with other people.

WHY PEOPLE SEXT

Studies have shown that attention and peer pressure are lead motivators. When pressured, many teen girls say that they do it in fear of losing the relationship if they refuse to sext. Other times teens think it makes them look cool to have a nude picture of their girlfriend/boyfriend.

- Peer pressure
- To gain attention
- To spark a relationship
- Popularity
- Flirting
- Joking
- To prove commitment
- To embarrass someone

When having these conversations, it's important to remember the following:

- **Have a conversation, don't give a lecture.** Before you talk to your teen about sexting, ask your teen what he or she knows about it already. **Find out if your teen knows anyone who has sexted before and ask your teen what he or she thinks about the practice.** Don't be judgmental. Be open to hearing what your teen has to say so that he or she will be open to discussing things with you in the future.
- **Try to ask age-appropriate questions.** It wouldn't be effective to have the same conversation with a pre-teen in middle school that you would have with a 17 year old in high school. It may not even be appropriate to use the term "sexting" when discussing the practice with a younger child. **With a child in middle school, you may ask a question like, "Honey, what kind of pictures do you think are ok to send to friends or to a boyfriend or girlfriend?"** To a 17 year

old, you may ask a more direct question like, "What do you know about sexting? Is that a common practice at your school or among your friends?"

- **Make sure to incorporate the topics of love, relationships, and self-worth.** Sometimes, a teen may be pressured by his or her significant other to send sexually explicit text messages. The dating partner might use phrases like, "If you really loved me you would." "You can trust me, I won't share these pictures with anyone." "Everyone is doing it. Don't be lame." **Let your teen know that if her boyfriend really cares about her, he wouldn't pressure her to do something she doesn't feel comfortable doing** and he wouldn't feel comfortable with her exposing herself like that and putting her privacy at risk.

IF AS A PARENT YOU LET YOUR CHILD KNOW
YOU WILL BE **SUPPORTIVE** AND
UNDERSTANDING
IF THEY EVER DO FEEL **PRESSURED** TO SEXT 
THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO **DISCUSS IT WITH YOU** WHEN IT OCCURS.

In this digital age, in which teens often have 24/7 access to texting and using the internet, it is more important than ever to talk to our teens about the dangers and risks associated with "sexting." **Please, do not think that your kids and teens are unaware of what sexting is.** At the very least, they know what it is. At worst, they may know someone who has done it or they may have done it themselves.

For more information: [What Parents Need to Know About Sexting](#) (2) (JAMA Pediatrics article)



Talking to Kids About Tragedies

#WeeklyBlogPost

Lying is something that almost every child will do, whether to get attention, gain power, or to get out of trouble.

As they come to understand that lying is wrong, they will still lie, usually to avoid punishment for a wrongdoing.



For some important things to remember about lying and teaching our children to tell the truth:

[CLICK HERE](#) (3) and **please, leave a comment!**

We love to hear from our readers and hope to receive your feedback!

Check ACPeds.org/Blog each Monday & Friday for a new post. Visit www.acpeds.org/subscribe to subscribe to the blog and click [here](#) (4) to subscribe to the Parent Talk newsletter.



Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

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1. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/2673719?redirect=true>
2. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2673714>
3. <https://www.acpeds.org/when-children-lie>
4. https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001_vy7Mr9Zh8wYiOUd36ZNIOQc0fzotqSL&id=preview