

The purpose of this sheet is to provide parents and educators background information on child development and personal safety. This information will help with making important decisions in the best interest of children's personal safety.

The Growing Personality...

- Start puberty
- Develop "crushes"
- See life more objectively
- Acquire pride and enjoyment from doing something well (academics, sports, music, art, friendships, etc.)
- Start to imagine what they might become in the future
- Identity is developing; they verbally compare themselves to others to figure out who they are
- Having things in common with friends becomes less important than talking together and confiding
- Have two realities: peer group reality and inner reality
- Increased capacity to empathize
- Conscience provides them with more guidance
- Test limits as they seek greater independence; discovering how it feels to be brave and confident (fluctuate between bold/defiant and clingy)
- Feel things more intensely as they have a broader emotional scope
- Experience adult-like sadness that shouldn't be trivialized; mourn losses deeply
- Heightened sense of embarrassment (especially girls)
- Can be vulnerable to someone who offers insincere flattery
- Understand justice and integrity; and can be outraged by those treated unfairly
- Seek increased privacy as they experiment with independence

What do children want to do? New Interests...

- Send pictures online
- Use web cams
- Use instant messaging (MSN, Yahoo, AOL), and email to chat and confide in people
- Use Internet for research and searching (Google, Yahoo, Dogpile, etc.)
- Use peer-to-peer file sharing programs to download music and games
- Use online games and diaries
- Use cell phones
- Stay home alone
- Babysit
- Start confiding in friends
- Experiment with relationships (intimacy)
- Create personal web pages
- Go out for Halloween with friends
- Sleepovers
- Overnight camps



Things to Consider...

- Closely monitor their increased independence
- Reinforce that the Internet is a public place (like the store, the neighbourhood, the playground or going to someone's house) and set the expectation that you will monitor them online to increase their safety
- Reinforce household guidelines for Internet use and set limits on the amount of time spent online (Use filtering software)
- Help them find safe ways for privacy (offline diary, notebook, talk to friends face-to-face)
- Ensure that children are not communicating in chatrooms as they are typically unregulated
- Provide adult supervision for instant messaging (MSN, AOL, Yahoo, etc.), emailing, online games and their chat components (know and check regularly all children's contacts on their buddy lists)
- Explain to children that there is no need or urgency to respond to messages. Teach children not to respond to messages that make them feel uncomfortable, scared or unsure and to tell a trusted adult
- Know your children's passwords and screen names
- If exposed to inappropriate material online (sexually explicit, violent, etc.), teach them to exit and tell a trusted adult.
- Teach them to trust their instincts* while online or offline. Use "what if" scenarios* to help them anticipate possible situations and practice appropriate responses
- Ensure they always get your permission before sharing personal information or accepting anything while online or offline
- Teach children to use inaccurate information for member profiles, as they can be viewed publicly. Ensure screen names and nicknames are nondescript (not revealing interests, age, gender, or posting pictures)
- Provide adult supervision for peer-to-peer file sharing programs (used to download music and games) as they may be exposed to sexually explicit material
- Provide adult supervision for web cam use and explain the caution necessary as they provide a window into the home
- Explain that pictures should only be accepted and sent with parental permission
- Explain that once a picture is sent online they lose control of what is done with it (it may never be completely removed from the Internet)
- Teach them that it is illegal for people to manufacture, possess or distribute naked or sexually explicit pictures of children under 18 years old (they need to tell a trusted adult they are presented with this situation)
- Explain to children that it is illegal to threaten someone online or offline. If someone threatens them, they need to tell a trusted adult
- Reinforce the concept of anonymity on the Internet (people can pretend to be anyone)
- Talk about relationships: healthy and unhealthy*. Explain that relationships started online need to be adult supervised (children should never meet in person someone they first met online without an accompanying parent)
- Teach them assertiveness skills
- Communicate openly; listen and acknowledge feelings
- Ensure they have at least one trusted adult they can talk to (parent, aunt, grandparent, teacher, etc.)
- Talk to them about the kind of person they feel they are and the kind of person they want to be (Discuss positive role models and your family's values)
- Encourage involvement in activities and focus on their identified strengths

• Adapted from: Linda Ashford; Sharon Cooper, M.D.; Gavin de Becker; Erik Erikson; Jay Giedd; William Glasser, M.D.; Daniel Goleman; Micheal Gurian; Kenneth Lanning; Mary Anne Layden and Linnea W. Smith, M.D.; Judith Lewis Herman; Amy Lynch; Jean Piaget; David Soussa; Deborah Yurgelun-Todd

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