Internet Safety

What are the risks of using the Internet?

- All kinds of material are on the web. You may come across material that is inappropriate and disturbing, including sexual, violent, drug-promoting, or otherwise offensive images and messages.
- Some of the information online is not accurate. Even web sites that look professional may not provide correct information.
- Using the Internet and sitting at the computer a lot may take important time away from other parts of your life, such as studies, sports, hobbies, friends, and family.
- People on the Internet may not be who they say they are. People who get your e-mail address and those who can tell you are on the computer, such as in a chat room, may send you inappropriate messages, try to get information from you, and try to get you to meet them in person.
- Because the Internet can seem to be anonymous, strangers and even people you might know can bully you online.

What should you know about using the Internet safely?

- Never give out personal information, such as your full name, address, telephone number, or school, online. Use a fake name for a screen name instead of a real name. Keep profiles "private" so that only people you allow can see them or write to you online.
- Never agree to meet someone you met only on the Internet.
- Never give e-mail addresses to anyone you do not know.
- Do not respond to any message or e-mail that makes you feel uncomfortable. Report these messages to parents, guardians, or other responsible adults.
- Tell your parents or another trusted adult about any sexual messages or pictures involving children found on the Internet because they are illegal.
- If someone bothers you in instant messaging or e-mail, block them.
- Do not post anything you would not want others to see. Remember, once you press the send button, the message lives forever on the web.

For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

American Academy of Pediatrics
Telephone: (847) 434-4000
Web: www.aap.org

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444
Web: www.acog.org

Crimes Against Children Research Center
University of New Hampshire
Telephone: (603) 862-1888
Web: www.unh.edu/ccrc/index.html

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center
National Criminal Justice Reference Service
Telephone: (800) 627-6872
Web: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Telephone: (703) 274-3900
24-Hour Hotline: (800) THE-LOST (800) 843-5678
Web: www.missingkids.com
NetSmartz Workshop: www.netsmartz.org

SafeKids.com
Web: www.safekids.com

staysafe.org
Telephone: (212) 854-5453
Web: http://staysafe.org/

Prepared by the ACOG Committee on Adolescent Health Care. For more information, e-mail adolhlth@acog.org.
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