

# Safe kids Healthy kids Happy kids

## Phone Technology Can Harm Your Teen

**Most tweens and teens have cell phone and computer access. It is how they stay in touch with one another. Rather than pass notes, teens text-message. They also store and share photos from computer to computer and phone to phone rather than printing them on paper. Digital technology connects kids not only with family and friends, but also with the world.**

Kids know more about cell phones and computers than their parents. However, *they are still emotionally immature and act on impulse.* Photos and messages sent to one person can spread like wildfire to many. Known results include suicides, loss of jobs and arrests.

Surveys report that 11-19 year-olds send or post sexually explicit pictures of themselves. The practice of sending these pictures by phone is called "sexting." These photos often end up on phones of people they do not even know. Sending sexually explicit or racy pictures can be a felony. Teens who send or receive sexual pictures could face legal action.

Cell phones are everywhere. Kids take them to parties, homes, gatherings and overnights. Your child may not even know someone took her picture until it shows up on a cell phone or on Facebook. This could happen also to a private text message.

What can parents do to help protect their teen?

- Talk to your teen about how he uses his cell phone. Have him show you all of the phone's functions.
- Ask about pictures she takes and receives from her phone. Ask to see her pictures.
- Educate your child about text and picture messaging. Discuss this article. Talk about

what could happen if a private photo or message is sent to strangers or posted on the Internet.

- Encourage your teen to be aware of cell phone use at parties and gatherings.
- Keep your computer in a public part of your home. Discourage computer use in bedrooms and behind closed doors.
- Learn about Facebook and sending text and picture phone messages. Keep up with technology.
- Ask to see his Facebook page.
- Talk to your teen about using the phone and Internet to bully others and ruin reputations.

A picture or message posted on the Internet is available for colleges and employers for years to come. Help your child understand that with digital technology, a private or funny intention can haunt him for a lifetime.



*Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital*



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