

Tipsheet:

Social media & teens



Using social media is a regular part of life for most young people. Support your child to manage the risks in their online world but still enjoy its benefits.

Social media can be enjoyable and beneficial for your kids

Contrary to what you might have heard, risk does not always equal harm on social media. Social media can offer many benefits for your kids, including:

- Connecting with family and friends
- Expanding their social circle
- Sharing their creativity through music and art
- Exploring different ideas
- Developing and expressing their unique identity
- Providing opportunities to learn with others
- Supporting others or through involvement in online campaigns
- Connect with others with similar interests or access online supports (particularly helpful for young people who are experiencing social isolation)

Bupa has teamed up with Kids Helpline to give you some information on how to support your child to manage the risk in their online world while still enjoying its benefits.



“I keep an eye on what my daughter is posting on social media by ‘friending’ her on Facebook and checking in regularly.”

Joy, parent to a 13-year-old

Common risks on social media for young people

Some of the things you may worry your kids are exposed to include:

- Access to inappropriate content such as pornography
- Sexting and image-based abuse (also known as revenge porn)
- Having their personal information shared
- Being groomed online
- Cyberbullying or trolling
- Self-esteem issues (i.e. not getting enough likes)
- Addiction to technology
- Promotion of risky behaviours or mental health issues (e.g. pro-anorexia sites)
- Viruses, malware and scams
- The age-limit for access to most social media sites is 13-years. Signing up for a social media account under the recommended age is a breach of the terms and conditions of the site.

Empower yourself and your child to take steps to stay safe

Teens are still developing the parts of their brain that are responsible for critical thinking, which means they may take more risks online and struggle to understand possible outcomes of risky actions.

Teens are likely to misjudge and make mistakes and are also unlikely to ask a parent for help when things go wrong online due to fear of getting in trouble or a desire to protect parents from stress.

Prevention strategies include:

- Role model positive online behaviours
- Provide a clear expectation about their online behaviour
- Know how to make strong passwords and update them regularly
- Encourage them not to share passwords with friends
- Discuss their digital footprint and regularly google search your and your child's name to ensure accounts are on private
- Encourage them to talk with a trusted adult about online issues
- Be share aware - teach them about the natural consequences of sharing something online
- Encourage them to connect only with people they know offline
- Keep identifying information to a minimum e.g. do not reveal their location
- Contact Police immediately if you become aware of grooming on social media
- Change privacy settings so only friends and family can view their profiles and posts
- Be aware of what your child is doing online and who they talk with
- Discuss and role-play how your child can approach you for support
- Create a plan for solving problems together that is predictable, collaborative (i.e. solving problems with your child) and solution rather than punishment focused



What to do when things go wrong

- Stay calm
- Ask questions to ensure you understand the situation
- If needed, take screenshots/ keep the evidence
- In the case of cyberbullying or inappropriate content, report any issues to games, sites or apps on which the situation occurred
- If you are dissatisfied with the response of the game, site or app, report the situation to the eSafety Commissioner
- Seek support for you and your child – this can include Kids Helpline, contacting your child’s school and involving any other professional supports needed
- If a situation is against the law or if there is a significant risk of harm, contact the police immediately



For further information or support

Encourage them to contact **Kids Helpline** on **1800 55 1800** or visit **kidshelpline.com.au** to start a webchat or email directly for additional support, tips and strategies.

As a parent, you're not alone in supporting your child through their use of social media.

If you're struggling with this, call the **Parentline service** in your State or Territory and talk through your options with a counsellor.

You could also visit the **eSafety** website to find out more about offensive content and cyberbullying and what you can do.

