



CANADIAN CENTRE *for*
CHILD PROTECTION



Mobile Safety



A guide for parents/guardians



www.mobility.protectchildren.ca

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LIVING IN A WIRELESS WORLD



Mobile phones offer both communication and safety benefits for parents and adolescents*. However, like most technologies, they also pose some risks. Parents need to be able to talk to their adolescents about mobile phone safety in a way that shows an understanding of the issues and the technology. Learning about your adolescent's mobile phone use sends the message that you care and are concerned about them.

The goal of the **Canadian Centre for Child Protection/TELUS Mobile Safety site** is to educate parents about the potential risks posed to adolescents using mobile phones, and to highlight strategies that can be used to help keep them safe. We encourage you to visit www.mobility.protectchildren.ca for more information about age-specific risks and safety strategies.

* The Canadian Centre for Child Protection does not recommend that parents purchase mobile phones for children under the age of 10.



Text/instant messaging

Text messaging is the most popular mobile phone feature among adolescents. It is far more common to see young mobile phone users sending short, typed messages to each other than it is to see them talking to each other on their phones.

Taking photos/videos and sending them to friends

Adolescents commonly take photos/videos of themselves or each other using cameras built into their phones.

Surfing the Internet/mobile TV

Internet use by mobile phone is popular among adolescents — users can check email, visit websites, download music and ringtones, and more. Some phones also offer television features, where the user can watch shows on their screens.

Updating social networking sites

Many social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) can be updated from mobile phones — either through Internet access or via text message. Adolescents can keep tabs on their friends and update their own status — what they are doing, where they are, who they are with, etc.

WHAT ADOLESCENTS ENJOY DOING ON THEIR

MOBILE PHONES

WHAT ADOLESCENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT TEXT MESSAGING

People can't hear and don't know what is being said

It's cheaper than calling

It offers privacy

It can be done anywhere (including class)

It's faster/easier



Mobile phones provide some important practical benefits for adolescents such as allowing them to contact you easily. At the same time, reports to Cybertip.ca indicate many adolescents are engaging in high-risk behaviour. Parents should reinforce that connecting with others by mobile phone has similar risks as connecting by computer.

TECHNOLOGY

what are the risks?

mobile phones provide 24-7 access to your adolescent

Adults and adolescents often stay connected using mobile devices. The pressure to have one of these devices is a growing issue; an adolescent can find themselves excluded from their peers if s/he does not have his/her own mobile phone. Prior to purchasing a phone for an adolescent, parents should educate themselves on the associated risks. These risks exist in the technology itself, the content it delivers and the instant contact it provides with others.

Text messaging

- ▶ Texts containing private, personal information could be sent to the wrong address
- ▶ Texts containing personal information or pictures could be shared with other users
- ▶ An adolescent could receive harassing or unwanted texts, including spam with inappropriate material

Camera/video phone

- ▶ Photos/videos sent from a mobile phone can be reproduced, altered, or posted online without the sender's consent or knowledge
- ▶ Photos/videos sent from a mobile phone can disclose a user's location
- ▶ Camera/video phones can be used to photograph or videotape a person without his/her knowledge

Internet and mobile TV access

- ▶ Like computers, mobile phones with Internet capability are vulnerable to spam, viruses and displaying sexually explicit content
- ▶ Can impact learning at school if restrictions are not placed upon mobile use

Global Positioning System (GPS)

- ▶ Most mobiles come equipped with GPS, which means that users can be located and pinpointed within a few metres. A user's location can be shown on a map

Adolescents may use mobile phone technology to take inappropriate pictures of themselves.



CONTENT

what are the risks?

Exposure to inappropriate material

- ▶ Receiving sexually explicit or threatening material through texts
- ▶ Receiving sexually explicit photos/videos
- ▶ Receiving inappropriate material from nearby users with Bluetooth enabled devices
- ▶ Viewing sexually explicit/inappropriate websites using a mobile phone's web browser

Losing control of photos or videos

- ▶ Photos/videos or personal information could be shared by an adolescent's friend or accidentally sent to someone unknown
- ▶ Photos/videos sent from a mobile phone could be posted online. Photo-sharing websites (e.g. Photobucket), online video sites (e.g. YouTube) and social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) make reproducing and distributing photos/videos extremely easy
- ▶ Photos could be posted in a public place (e.g. a school) for anyone to see
- ▶ Material could be copied or taken from a mobile phone using Bluetooth technology
- ▶ Uploading photos/videos to a blog/social networking page from a mobile phone may disclose location or other information that puts the adolescent at risk



case study

In April 2008, two male students were expelled from a high school after **they taped up pictures sent from a teenage girl's mobile phone**. After the girl and her boyfriend (one of the two expelled students) broke up, the two boys printed off naked pictures the girl had sent and posted them in the boys' locker room.

CONTACT

what are the risks?



It's public information!

Remind your adolescent that texting is not private — once they send a text message, they have created a record that can be stored, shared and made permanent.

Meeting someone

Relationships that start online seem to progress faster than they do offline. These online relationships can quickly progress to the adolescent wanting to meet up in person — they may not perceive any threat or need for safety precautions. This is further complicated if adolescents are connected and reachable 24 hours a day on their mobile phone. It is important to remind adolescents not to meet up with anyone they meet online without parental permission.

Breaking boundaries

All adolescents need a sense of belonging, and many enjoy establishing connections by texting with friends. Texting, however, removes the social limits normally placed on face-to-face interaction. Without these limits, personal boundaries can be crossed earlier, and very personal, sometimes sexual comments or questions can be raised. An adolescent can be left feeling ashamed of the interaction. Consider placing restrictions on when and how much your adolescent uses text messaging.

Experimenting

It is natural for adolescents to experiment and test boundaries. Doing so online, however, can leave adolescents feeling overexposed and feeling humiliated. Remind children that the Internet (including when accessed from a mobile phone) is not a safe environment to test boundaries. There can be long-term impacts because of the permanent nature of the Internet.



Report abuse to Cybertip.ca

Cybertip.ca is Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. It receives and addresses reports from the public about child pornography, luring, child sex tourism, child trafficking, and children who are exploited through prostitution. Cybertip.ca also provides the public with information, referrals and other resources to help keep children safe while on the Internet.



CANADIAN CENTRE *for*
CHILD PROTECTION

Our Mission:

- ▶ Reduce the incidence of missing and sexually exploited children
- ▶ Educate the public on child personal safety and sexual exploitation
- ▶ Assist in the location of missing children
- ▶ Advocate for and increase awareness about issues relating to missing and sexually exploited children

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection is a charitable organization dedicated to the personal safety of all children. Our goal is to reduce child victimization by providing programs and services to the Canadian public. Please visit: www.protectchildren.ca for more information.