

# Online pornography & respectful relationships

Your teen may be curious and actively seek out pornography online. The risk here is that exposure to graphic, violent or misleading messages about sexual practices and gender stereotypes could give them the wrong idea about sex and respectful relationships.

## How do teens find pornography online?

- Your teen may actively search for explicit content online, out of curiosity or because their friends are talking about it.
- A friend or sibling (or an adult) may share inappropriate content (see also advice for parents about unwanted contact and grooming).
- Your teen may accidentally type the wrong word or phrase into an internet search or mistakenly click on a link to something that looks interesting but turns out to be pornographic.
- They might click on links in phishing or spam emails, dodgy links and pop-ups (even on harmless websites).
- They may also encounter pornography on free games websites for children. Some popular children's cartoons have been hijacked with a pornographic version — which can be very

## What to do if my teen finds pornography online?

Whatever the age of your child...

- Stay calm.
- Listen, assess, pause.
- Reassure your child they are not in trouble.
- Try to understand rather than criticise or punish.
- When children fear punishment, they may close down emotionally and be reluctant to talk.
- Be sensitive to how they feel.
- It is important to talk with your child about how the content made them feel. This makes the conversation less confronting and allows them to talk more openly about their experience.
- Does your child feel good, bad, safe, scared, uncomfortable, curious, repulsed or something else? Any or all of these feelings are normal reactions.
- Seek professional help if you are concerned your child is very upset or struggling to process what they have seen.
- Encourage your child to talk to you about any questions they have about what they see online. Let them know they can talk to you at any time.
- For teens, the most important message is that pornography is not real life and is not a part of a respectful relationship.