



# Sexting



The Centers for Disease Control reports that sexual activity among high school students has decreased in the last 10 years but digital sexual activity is becoming more common.

## What is sexting?

Sending or receiving sexually explicit/suggestive/intimate images, messages or videos via smartphones and internet.

## How prevalent is sexting among teens?

Recent study shows rates of sexting increasing among teens and prevalence increases with age

- ◆ 14.8% sent 'sext'
- ◆ 27.4% received 'sext'
- ◆ 12% forwarded someone else's sext without their consent
- ◆ 8.4% had their own sext forwarded without their consent

Meta-analysis published in February 2018 JAMA Pediatrics

## Why do some teens sext?

- Areas of teen brain that control impulse control, judgement and decision making are still developing
- Understanding of privacy and boundaries are still being formed
- Hard to grasp permanent consequences of actions/choices
- Developing an interest in sex and are exploring/experimenting the different ways to express selves
- Some think sexting is a way to show affection
- Feel pressured by peers
- Way to get attention or "prove" one's love
- Think it's funny
- Form of flirting
- Teens don't separate online and offline lives
- Adult dating apps teens are using make it easy

## What are the consequences of sexting?

Any digital content is impossible to control once it's in cyberspace. Anything can be cut, pasted, screenshot and sent to anyone in a matter of seconds

- Content is nearly impossible to erase
- Can damage one's reputation
- Feeling that one's intimate self has been exposed
- Can lead to depression and/or other mental health challenges
- It's illegal! Sending or receiving nude photos of someone under 18 (even with their consent) is considered child pornography—a felony.

## Common Sense Media's Advice for parents

(from [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org))

- **Don't wait for an incident to happen to your child or your child's friend before you talk about the consequences of sexting.** Sure, talking about sex or dating with teens can be uncomfortable, but it's better to have the talk before something happens.
- **Remind your kids that once an image is sent, it can never be retrieved -- and they will lose control of it.** Ask teens how they would feel if their teachers, parents, or the entire school saw the picture, because that happens all the time.
- **Talk about pressures to send revealing photos.** A study by Michigan State University found that many teens are sexually harassed online by their peers. Let teens know that you understand how they can be pushed or dared into sending something. Tell them that no matter how big the social pressure is, the potential social humiliation can be hundreds of times worse.
- **Teach your children that the buck stops with them.** If someone sends them a photo, they should delete it immediately. It's better to be part of the solution than the problem.
- **Check out Common Sense Education's Sexting Handbook.** This resource gives families the language and support to take texting and cell phone power back into their own hands. It's also a great resource for parents who are uncomfortable dealing directly with this issue.

## Talking to the kids you care about...

The average age a child is given a smartphone is 10. Having conversations about safety, personal responsibility, boundaries, respect and resisting peer pressure have to happen **early (before sexting is even possible) and often!**

## Did you know...

Snapchat photos do **NOT** disappear as claimed – the app saves the photos to the phone and they can be extracted

**Teach your child to never forward a sext and to let an adult know right away if one is received.**

For more resources on talking with your child about sexting go to [tritowncouncil.org](http://tritowncouncil.org)

