

## Unwanted sexual contact

### Older children

Some adults befriend children online for sexual purposes. This is called grooming. It is illegal and should be reported to police. In many cases police can prosecute adults seeking children for sexual purposes even if they haven't made face to face contact with a child.

Older children may become more interested in websites and gaming sites that enable direct interaction with others including teens and adults. The following tips can help to protect your child against unwanted sexual contact.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Explore your child's favourite websites. In general it is useful to consider whether you are comfortable with the content of the sites and the potential for contact with others including teens and adults. Is your child socially ready to manage contact from potentially ill meaning strangers?
- If you agree to your child accessing sites which may allow direct contact with others consider establishing rules about the amount of information they can provide, including not providing their surname, address or school, and not uploading or SMSing images or videos without parental permission.
- If your child is at an age where you have begun educating them about strangers and protecting their body it may be useful to expand those lessons to cover online contact. The appropriate age for this education will vary and is a decision for you and your family.
- It may be useful to make a rule about what is and isn't okay to discuss on the computer and what should be reported to you or a trusted adult. For example, one rule might be 'if anyone asks you about your underwear or private parts when you are on the computer get Mum to check that what they are saying is okay'.
- Some children feel worried about their parent's reaction to things they may have said or done online and this can prevent them reporting genuine concerns. Perpetrators play on this worry and shame to isolate children. To overcome this reassure your child that they can always safely tell you that they feel uncomfortable or worried about what somebody has been saying to them and what they might have been saying and doing in response.
- If your child shows changes in behaviour or mood that are concerning including increased or decreased sexualised behaviours, clinginess or withdrawal explore your concerns with them and if necessary seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at [www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx). The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. If of school age, your child's school may also be able to provide guidance and support.

- If there is a threat to your child's safety the police can help. In a life threatening and time critical situation call Triple Zero (000).

## **More information**

The Cybersmart program provides a range of cybersafety materials for parents and their children. For more information, resources, advice and tips, visit the Cybersmart website at [www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au). Encourage your children and teens to take a look around the website. If you have young children, you may like to explore it together to help them understand how to protect themselves against online risks and make the most of their experiences online.