



Pornography and children: what families should know



Explicit material now arrives through ordinary apps: social feeds, messages, search, ads, games, not just adult sites.

Accuracy matters: not everyone who views porn is caught in compulsive use, and not every exposure causes lasting harm. What the evidence does show is that exposure is widespread, often early, often accidental, and increasingly includes violent and coercive content.

- 1 **Begin earlier than feels comfortable.** Conversations about privacy, consent, bodies, and asking for help should come before first exposure: which may be before adolescence.
- 2 **Respond calmly when a child discloses.** Shock, anger, or punishment produces secrecy. First words: "You are not in trouble for telling me."
- 3 **Separate exposure from character.** Curiosity, accidental exposure, and compulsive behavior are three different things. Don't label a child immoral, damaged, or broken.
- 4 **Use practical safeguards.** Age controls, filtering, device rules, nighttime limits, private-browsing restrictions. No technical control is complete.
- 5 **Teach consent directly.** Real intimacy requires mutual consent, dignity, and communication. Porn is an unreliable teacher, and about a third of young people report using it as sex education anyway.
- 6 **Watch for changes.** Secrecy, sleep loss, withdrawal, compulsive device use, escalating content, anxiety, aggression, sudden changes at school.
- 7 **Seek qualified help when control is lost.** A licensed mental-health professional experienced in adolescent development, compulsive sexual behavior, trauma, or family systems can assess without exaggerating or minimizing.

Silence doesn't protect children; calm, specific conversation does. Most children exposed to pornography will not develop a disorder. Problematic use is real, measurable, and treatable, and the people best placed to help are trained professionals, not an app.

SCRIPTURE, IF YOUR FAMILY WANTS IT ALONGSIDE THESE STEPS

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 · "...you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way..."

Isaiah 42:3 · "He won't break a bruised reed. He won't quench a dimly burning wick."

Psalms 103:13-14 · "...he knows how we are made. He remembers that we are dust."

Proverbs 25:28 · "Like a city that is broken down and without walls is a man whose spirit is without restraint."

Not therapy, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional treatment. This handout doesn't diagnose, treat, or promise any outcome. If what you're carrying is heavier than a handout, talk to a counselor, a doctor, or your pastor. If you're in immediate danger or need urgent help, contact your local emergency services. Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741.

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