What is “Sexting?”

- “Sexting” means sex-texting.
- It is the sending or receiving of inappropriate words or photos over a cell phone text or picture message.
- Messages can also be exchanged through social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.
- Sexting is not the same as flirting, and it can have serious consequences.

Sexting Stats

According to a recent survey conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy:

- 20% of teens say they have sent/posted nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves
- 39% of teens report sending or posting sexually suggestive messages
- 71% of teen girls and 67% of teen guys who have sent or posted sexually suggestive content say they have sent/posted this content to a boyfriend/girlfriend
- 38% of teen girls and 39% of teen boys say they have had sexually suggestive text messages or emails—originally meant for someone else—shared with them
- 51% of teen girls say pressure from a guy is a reason girls send sexy messages or images; only 18% of teen boys cited pressure from female counterparts as a reason

Information for Victims of Cyber Bullying

If you or someone you know has been a victim of cyber bullying, or bullying as the result of inappropriate content sent over cell phones or the internet, don’t be a victim—be an activist.

- Tell a teacher, counselor, administrator, or another adult in your school. Know that a student’s safety and well-being at school is every adult’s number one priority. We are here to help.
- If you receive an inappropriate message that could damage someone’s reputation, be responsible and report it to an adult. Do not continue to send the message to others.

Community Resources

W.H.A.T—Wilmington Health Access for Teens
910-790-9949

Websites for Students and Parents
www.safeteens.com
www.connectsafely.org
www.nhcs.net

Have Questions or Want More Information?
Contact Hannah Griesbauer, NHCS Behavior Specialist
Phone: 910-254-4188
Email: hannah.griesbauer@nhcs.net

Sources
- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
  - www.thinkbeforeyoutext.com
  - www.msnbc.com
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What You Need To Know

Tips for Parents

• Talk to your kids about what they are doing in cyberspace. Make sure they fully understand that messages or pictures they send over the Internet or their cell phones are not truly private or anonymous.

• Know with whom your kids are communicating. Supervising and monitoring your kids’ whereabouts in real life and in cyberspace doesn’t make you a nag; it’s just part of your job as a parent.

• Consider limitations on electronic communication. The days of having to talk on the phone in the kitchen in front of the whole family are long gone, but you can still limit the time your kids spend online and on the phone.

• Be aware of what your teens are posting publicly. Check out their Facebook page. This isn’t snooping—this is information your kids are making public. If everyone else can look at it, why can’t you?

• Set expectations and make sure you are clear about what you consider appropriate electronic behavior.

• If you suspect that your son or daughter has become a victim of bullying as the result or sexting or other unsafe tech-behavior, contact your child’s teacher, a school counselor, or an administrator.

“Sexting” In The News

Recently, “sexting” has seen lots of attention in the media. Whether it’s a celebrity or an average high-school student, it seems that no one is safe from the consequences of this type of behavior. Here are a few examples:

• February 2009: A 15 year-old Pennsylvania girl faced child pornography charges after police say she sent nude pictures of herself over the internet.

• March 2009: An Ohio teen committed suicide after a nude photo she sent via text message to her boyfriend was forwarded to other students at her school, resulting in bullying, humiliation, and embarrassment.

• In 2009 a 17-year-old Wisconsin boy was charged with possessing child pornography after he posted naked pictures of his 16-year-old ex-girlfriend online. In Alabama, authorities arrested four middle-school students for exchanging nude photos of themselves. In Rochester, N.Y., a 16-year-old boy is now facing up to seven years in prison for forwarding a nude photo of a 15-year-old girlfriend to his friends.

Potential Consequences for Sexting

The consequences for engaging in the risky behavior of sexting are not limited to social embarrassment. In North Carolina, and in other states, taking nude photos of oneself or forwarding on nude photos of a minor can constitute child pornography. This can lead to a felony conviction, and the possibility of having to register as a sex offender.

Additionally, college admissions offices and potential employers have become much more tech-savvy themselves, and are now investigating potential students or employees on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to check for inappropriate content.

Tips for Students

1.) Don’t assume anything you send or post is going to remain private. 40% of teens and young adults say they have had a sexually suggestive message (originally meant to be private) shown to them and 20% say they have shared such a message with someone other than the person for whom it was originally meant.

2.) There is no changing your mind in cyberspace—anything you send or post will never truly go away. Think about it: Even if you have second thoughts and delete a racy photo, there is no telling who has already copied that photo and posted it elsewhere.

3.) Don’t give in to the pressure to do something that makes you uncomfortable, even in cyberspace. More than 40% of teens and young adults say “pressure from guys” is a reason girls and women send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. More than 20% of teens and young adults say “pressure from friends” is a reason guys send an post sexually suggestive messages and images.

4.) Consider the recipients reaction. Just because a message is meant to be fun doesn’t mean the person who gets it will see it that way.

5.) Nothing is truly anonymous. It is important to remember that even if someone only knows you by screen name, online profile, phone number or email address, that they can probably find you if they try hard enough.

New Hanover County School Board Policies You Should Know

Policy 8307: Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Policy 8431: Use of Portable Electronic Devices by Students

For more information about these and other policies visit, www.nhcs.net/policies/policymanual