

Sexting: What Is It?

Did you know...

- ! About 1 in 4 teens are sexting. And it's on the rise!
- ! Kids as young as 11 have sent nude photos of themselves electronically.
- ! More than half of those who shared a sext share it with multiple people.
- ! Teens feel pressure from friends or romantic partners to send these images.
- ! Sending images is illegal! Content of a sexual nature of a minor is considered child pornography.

But did you also know that it's age appropriate behavior?

Experts say that rather than being shocked to find that kids are sexting, we should instead be talking about it from an early age, just as we should about other aspects of their developing sense of self, personal safety and boundaries. It's becoming a normal part of teen sexual behavior and development.

Dr. Megan Moreno, a pediatrician who is vice chair of digital health at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, said: "My main message would be for parents to step back for a minute from the alarmist nature of the word 'sexting' and think about developmentally appropriate foolish romantic things teenagers do." Parents might, for example, think about the risky things they did themselves when they were younger, and when they discuss it with their teenagers, try to view sexting through that lens: here is something that might feel like a normal thing to do and a normal thing to ask, and other people are doing it, but it's a risky thing for you to do and if you find yourself in that situation we can talk about it."

As kids get older, conversations should become more direct. Conversations should include the pressure to do it as well as the consequences of sending messages and images. Let kids tell you what they know, what they think, what they're seeing, what they're feeling. It's part of talking about safety, online and offline, and part of talking about social behavior, friendships and romantic relationships and how people treat others and the way we want to be treated. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/12/well/family/teens-are-sexting-now-what.html>

