

## Protecting Kids From Pornography Problems

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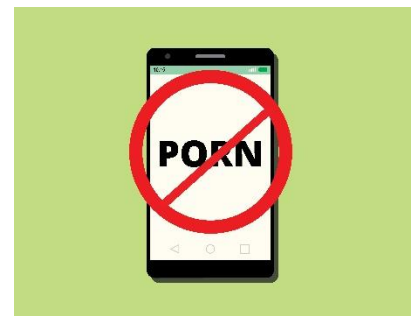
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Unfortunately kids are being exposed to pornography at younger and younger ages. Increasing mobile internet access is enabling them to easily view porn either unintentionally or intentionally.

Many kids get exposed to porn by their friends who are eager to share what they've discovered. This is what happened to [Mae, a 6-year-old, who was shown an explicit video](#) by her 11-year-old friend. Although Mae felt this wasn't right, it awakened her curiosity to see more videos like this. Viewing porn led Mae to inappropriately acting in sexual ways with other kids. When her parents finally learned what was going on they were devastated and got her into counseling.

Another mom talked about getting her 12-year-old son into therapy after she caught him in the middle of the night viewing porn. She learned he had been viewing porn since he was 8-years-old and was spending increasing amounts of time on it. She was shocked it had gone on so long without her realizing it.

So what can you do to protect your kids from porn? There are things you can do including educating them about their bodies, warning them about the problems with porn and discussing ways to turn away from porn.



### Educating Your Kids About Their Bodies

All kids are curious about their bodies. You want to be the source of this education, not the internet or their friends.

When your kids are preschoolers, read age appropriate [books about the differences between boys bodies and girls bodies](#). Books allow young children to review the material many times to learn from the stories. By the time your children are 5-years-old, they should have a basic understanding of male and female bodies plus know how reproduction works.

Do they really need this information so soon? Yes. Having this knowledge can help [protect your kids from sexual abuse](#).

As your kids grow up, you will want to provide more books and discussion about their changing bodies. By talking about sexuality, you send a clear message to your kids that you are open to discussing it. If your kids have further questions or run into problems, they will feel more comfortable being able to approach you.

### Warning Your Kids About Pornography

You want to alert your kids to pornography before they accidentally see it. It's a good idea to bring the topic up by the time they are 6-years-old.

You can describe porn as pictures or videos of people with little or no clothes on engaged in sexual behavior. Let your kids know that if they see these types of pictures or videos it will probably feel wrong.

Also let them know that if they see porn, you'd like them to look away and then tell you. Reassure them that they won't be in trouble. You want to know so that you can help them.

Having a conversation about porn is challenging for most parents. Kristen Jensen and Gail Poyner have made it easier with their book [Good Pictures, Bad Pictures](#). It's a story of a mom talking to her son about pornography. The book is designed to be read together with 5 to 12-year-old kids. It discusses how kids can get addicted to porn and how they can avoid this.

Let your kids know that you've taken steps to block this unwanted content using special software like [OpenDNS](#). Also explain that you'll be monitoring their devices to keep them safe. This might include [monitoring software](#) or manually checking something like their phone's text history.

### **Explaining Sexting is Child Pornography**

One rule you'll want to make clear is no taking nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves. Unfortunately sexting is common among kids. They may do this to show off or prove their interest in someone.

What they often don't realize is that sending sexual images of minors is against the law. Some states have been prosecuting children for child pornography or felony obscenity.

Be sure to discuss the fact that once a picture is sent, it is around forever. That picture may be passed around to many others with devastating results. Common Sense Media provides a [Sexting Handbook](#) that shares stories and information to teach your kids about the real problems with sexting.

### **Guiding Your Kids to Making Good Choices**

You want your children to make good decisions - especially when you're not around. You can help develop their ability to think through choices and possible consequences by having many small conversations with them.

News stories are a wonderful source of real life examples which can launch these conversations. A quick way to start a discussion is to share something you've recently read. For example, *"I just learned that 20% of teens have sent nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves to friends - wow! That really worries me since I also read a story about teens being arrested for this because it's considered distributing child pornography."*

By listening to your children's thoughts and feelings on these stories, you'll develop a deeper understanding of their views. You'll also be in a better position to influence their thinking about these important issues.

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