

Teens and Technology

Computers, televisions, cell phones, gaming devices, "Blackberries," iPods - What types of technology is your teen using on a regular basis? Do you know what your teen is using these devices for? It can be overwhelming to keep up with all of the technology, but, according to a survey of students in grades 5-12, nearly one-third (29%) of students say their parents would disapprove if they knew what they were really doing on the Internet.

For many teens, technology is a means to a very important end – connecting with friends. Although there are very positive benefits to the technology we have at our fingertips, it can also facilitate things like drug use and other risky behaviours. For example, all you need to purchase prescription drugs online is cash or credit card. More than 4600 illegal pharmacies were shut down in 2005 alone. Have you ever googled "marijuana"? Try it – You will find 33,300,000 links. Some will be to credible information, but you will also get links to sites that promote the use of marijuana.

The first step you can take to make sure your child is not misusing technology or being misguided by the information they are receiving is to get educated. Some common forms of technology being used by teens are:

1. Social Networking:

Social networking sites include Facebook and MySpace. These sites allow people to gather online around shared interests or causes, like finding people who live nearby or who are in the same age range. These sites allow teens to design their own personalized page on the Internet. Teens love social networking sites because it's their space. There is a sense of empowerment attached to controlling a piece of their own world and this is typically a world where parents are not present.

2. Text messaging:

Text messaging allows short (around 100-character) messages to be sent and received discretely via cell phone. Text messaging is great if you are in a public place and can't hear the other caller or if you just want to make plans with someone, but don't need or want an in-depth conversation. However, for these same reasons, texting can also be a tool that teens prefer to use when sharing information about where to meet up when they don't want to be overheard.

3. Music and online videos:

While there are many entertaining and safe Websites promoting popular songs and videos, there are also many that contain messages harmful to youth. Nearly one in 20 teens viewed drug-related videos online during a one-month period; 35 percent were under age 16.

(Nielsen Online Custom Study).

Remember, you are your child's best educator. Be there to educate your children about alcohol and other drugs so that your children do not rely on other sources such as the internet and social networking sites.

The remainder of this newsletter will provide you with tips for monitoring your child's technology use and resources for educating yourself about the world of technology your child is exposed to.



"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

- James Baldwin

If your community has a substance abuse prevention event or activity you'd like to share with our readers, please contact Cathy Mah at cathymah@ades.bc.ca © 2009

In This Issue:

Teens & Technology	1	Did You Know ...	2
Prevention Tips	2	Resources	2

#203-2550 Shaughnessy Street
Port Coquitlam BC V3C 3G2

Tel: 604 944-4155 • Fax: 604 944-4149

info@ades.bc.ca • www.ades.bc.ca

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Tips for monitoring your child's use of technology:

- **Limit your teen's time spent online**, and put computers in a common area of the house (not your teen's bedroom) so you can more easily monitor use.
- **Be clear and consistent about what is off limits** — including Websites, chat rooms, games, blogs, or certain music downloads — and how to handle information promoting drugs or sex. Discuss consequences for breaking the rules.
- **Enforce the consequences.** The more meaningful the consequence to the teen, the less likely they will break the rules.
- **Sit down with your teen and view their personal Website or blog.** Review your teen's profile, pictures, video, and music uploads. Also check out the links that your teen includes on his/her page. Check out his/her "network," as well, and what type of information is on his/her friends' sites.
- **Remind your teens that the Internet is public space** and anyone, including college admissions offices, potential employers, and even predators, can see what they're posting online. Talk to your teen about not posting personally identifiable information or regrettable pictures/videos and information.
- **Make sure your teen knows that everything "on the web" isn't necessarily legal.** Alcohol, tobacco, illicit and prescription drugs are all marketed on the Internet, along with weapons, pornography, and opportunities for real-world sexual liaisons. Talk to them about letting you know if they receive personal messages encouraging them to engage in illegal behaviors so that you can notify the appropriate authorities.
- **Use technology to help monitor your teen.** See for yourself what's posted on social networking sites (i.e. MySpace.com) your teen visits by setting up your own account. Use text messaging to check in with your

teen after school. If your teen has a camera phone, have him/her send a picture of where he/she is and who he/she is with.

- **If you suspect, go the extra mile.** Some technologies enable you to track the exact Web pages, blogs and message boards that your teen visits.
- **Talk to other parents about how they monitor their teens**, especially in this age of gadgets and digital devices. Ask what has worked for them and what hasn't. Stay connected and share your stories to aid your monitoring activities and keep your kids safe.

Get Educated:

For Internet Acronyms Parents Need to Know, [click here](#)

For drug lingo, [click here](#)

DID YOU KNOW

Here are a few facts about Canadian teens and their use of the internet:

- Online socializing is by far, the overwhelming reason why teens surf the net. Eighty-eight percent of teens surveyed have participated in an online social activity.
- 59% of teens visit online social networks or communities a few times a week to daily.
- 61% of teens report that the Internet is important to their social life and, among those who visit online social networks or communities, half (52%) say it is important to their day-to-day life.
- Teens who are aware of the websites Windows Live Space and YouTube spend a weekly average of 7 hours and 5 hours, respectively, on these sites.
- Three-quarters of teens (74%) have used instant messaging to communicate with friends or family members, making applications such as Windows Live Messenger (formerly called MSN Messenger) indispensable to teens.
- Teens are avid online gamers, with over half of teens playing against people they know or complete strangers, and visiting gaming websites at least a few times a week or more.

Source: Ipsos Reid study –

Inter@ctive Teens: The Impact of the Internet on Canada's Next Generation

57th Annual General Meeting

Tuesday June 16 @ 7:00PM

The Community Room

Leigh Square Community Arts Village, Port Coquitlam

RSVP to 604 944-4155 or info@ades.bc.ca



Available Resources & Workshops

Making Decisions Series

A leading education initiative to combat drug and alcohol abuse and encourage social responsibility.

Grades 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9 [<more info](#)

Parents as Preventors™

Workshops designed for parents, emphasizing the central role parents play in influencing their children to make healthy choices regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. [<more info](#)

drugfacts.ca

tobaccofreesports.ca

For more information please visit our website or contact our office.

RESOURCES

1. Parents the Anti Drug

On-line Exposure: Teens at Risk and Parents Disconnected

[Click here for PDF](#)

2. American Academy of Pediatrics

The Internet and Your Family

[Click here for PDF](#)

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