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 - What topics do you want to see covered in future issues? Call 704-384-CARE or email us to let us know.

NOVANT HEALTH

Healthy Lifestyles

Our facilities, advanced medical treatments and procedures, and our highly qualified staff have distinguished Novant Health as a not-for-profit healthcare leader for the residents of North Carolina.



Calendar

- May 22
StrokeSmart seminar and luncheon
- June 2
Cancer Survivor's Day

Healthy recipe

Herbed rice with mushrooms and wilted spinach

Health quiz

How much do you know about sleep?



Find a doctor



SHARE

Virtual reality: keeping children safe in the Internet age

By Rachel Spenseri, Web Center Specialist, Novant Health

If you are over age 20, you probably remember when you called your friends from a telephone that was tethered to the wall in the kitchen or family room. In this age of cell phones, email and text messages, technology has changed the way people communicate for the better in many ways. But new safety threats exist today that didn't exist when we were younger, such as online sexual victimization and cyberbullying.

Sexual victimization can range from a child's intentional or unintentional exposure to sexually explicit images or language, to a physical encounter with a sexual predator. Consider this statistic: one in 25 youths reports receiving some type of sexual solicitation online where the perpetrator attempted to make offline contact with the child (according to *American Psychologist*).

Cyberbullying is bullying or harassment that happens virtually. It can be a text message, email, instant message, social media profile post or chat room message. It could include hurtful or embarrassing words or images. It could even be someone creating a fictitious profile pretending to be someone else. One in three teens has experienced online harassment or cyberbullying (according to Pew Research Center). Considering that more than 93 percent of teens (age 12 to 17) in the United States use the Internet, what can parents do to help keep their children safe in this new world of virtual communication and information?



- Keep home computers in a common room, not in the child's bedroom.
- Talk openly about the potential dangers of communicating online with people they do not know, sexual victimization and making or receiving hostile or threatening communications. Teach children that what they are told online may or may not be true, and people may or may not be who they say they are.
- Consider requiring your child to share their usernames and passwords with you; monitor your child's saved files, email and live communications like social media sites, chat rooms or instant messaging.
- Spend time with your child online and learn about their favorite online destinations. Consider setting rules about computer usage such as what sites your child may visit or how long they may spend online.
- Teach your child what to do if someone is being threatening or saying something inappropriate to them online: never respond to messages or posts that are obscene, harassing or make him or her uncomfortable in any way, and tell a trusted adult what was written or shared.
- Instruct children to never upload (post) a picture of themselves anywhere that it could be seen by people who they do not personally know.
- Instruct your children to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online or give out personal information like their name, address, phone number or school.
- Tell children to never download files or photos from someone they do not know.
- Use the parental control tools offered by your Internet provider and/or by blocking software that filters explicit or violent content.
- Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, the public library and at the homes of your child's friends. These are all places, outside your normal supervision, where your child could encounter online harassment or an online predator.

Keeping Kids Healthy

The Children's 24-hour Emergency Dept.



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