



# Blue Sky Pediatrics Asheville

Making every Child's day brighter by.....

**Newsletter**

offering information about internet safety.



## INTERNET SAFETY

Technology has made our lives, in some respects, easier and more efficient. But for our children and teens, technology can provide dangerous places that put our loved ones at risk. Everyone is connected to the internet these days, and it is hard to imagine our daily routines without our access to Facebook, Twitter, Four-Square or other social media outlets. Technologies like tablets, smart phones, and iPods are also helping our kids access information with ease, allowing them to keep in touch with their friends, collaborate on school projects with other classmates, and are more or less fun, but like most things in life, moderation is the key.

The internet is everywhere and hard to hide. It affects how our children gather information and communicate with others. For parents, it is hard to keep up with all of the latest advancements in these media outlets and it can become overwhelming. Kids are becoming introduced to the internet at younger ages but once your child shows an interest in surfing the web, it is important to start an open discussion with them. Topics for conversation should include: How to navigate the internet safely, the importance of keeping passwords and personal information private, not sharing too much information online, and the risks of chat room conversation.

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## PROTECTING YOUR KIDS ON THE WORLD-WIDE-WEB

As much as the internet is fun for kids to use, it is also a place where danger lurks. Frank communication with your children about your concerns and dangers of the internet are very important. Setting expectations and limitations with their internet use is vital to keep your kids safe. More importantly, being consistent with your expectations and limitations will make your message clear. Parents will not be able to monitor their child's internet usage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but having family internet rules that everyone abides by can help protect your kids. The basic rules should include the following: keeping the computer in a common area, blocking access to chat rooms and filtering web content, obtaining passwords or "friend-ing" your child so that social media pages are more easily monitored, and setting limits to time spent engaging in media/online activity. It is recommended to limit screen and internet time to no more than 2 hours per day max.



## WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. Sometimes this can be easy to spot—For example, a text message, tweet, or response to a status update on Facebook that is harsh, mean, cruel, or threatening. Some kids report that a fake account, web page, or "online persona" has been created with the intent to harass and bully. As more and more youths have access to computers and cell phones, the incidence of cyberbullying is likely to rise. If you discover that your child is being cyberbullied, let your child know that it isn't his or her fault. You can block the bully. Most devices have settings that allow you to electronically block emails or text messages from specific people. Know your kids' online world by checking their postings and be aware of how they spend their time online. If you find that an adult is involved, it may meet the definition of cyber-harassment or cyber-stalking, a crime that can have legal consequences and involve jail time.



## WHEN TO WORRY

If you note that your child is spending an excessive amount of time on the internet as opposed to doing other things that he or she found enjoyable in the past, then you should be worried. If your child is consistently breaking your agreed-upon family internet rules, then you should be worried.

Finally, if your child is using the internet as their only outlet to stay in touch with "friends" or using it as the only outlet to meet new people, then you should be worried. If these worries are occurring, then it is important to discuss these concerns with your pediatrician and not "blow it off" as a phase your child is going through.