

HEALTH HINT!



Protect Your Child from Online Predators & Dangers

Without leaving the comfort of their own home, predators can learn everything they need to know about your child by cruising sites such as MySpace.com, Webshots.com and WebcamNow.com. How educated are you about the dangers of the web and do you know what information your child is posting online?

According to a study performed by the Crimes Against Children Research Center, more than 30% of children, when asked, will give out personal information such as their home address or email address when chatting with strangers online.

As networking sites, such as MySpace.com and video sites, such as WebcamNow.com continue to grow in popularity, parents need to encourage their children and teens to take precautions when hanging out online. Here are a few safety tips:

- * **Learn** about computers and stay current with the latest technology. Research online predators and become familiar with the online world your child visits.
- * **Discuss** with your child how he or she is going to use the computer and develop online safety rules.
- * **Keep** your computer in a common area and look at the screen while your child is online. If your child has a computer in their own room, remove the internet access and allow them to use it for school work, music and computer games only. Keep all internet access in a common area where you can supervise and oversee online activity.
- * **Know** your child's screen name and password and be sure to have access to their account information for web sites such as MySpace.com or any other chat rooms.
- * **Use** blocking software to prevent your child from looking at inappropriate material. You should also view the web history on your computer to see which sites your child has visited.
- * **Talk** with your child about never sharing any personal information online. Children should know not to share photos, videos or passwords. They should also be told to never arrange a meeting with anyone they meet online.
- * **Invite** your child to talk to you openly if they ever feel uncomfortable online. Remind them to never respond to anything or anyone that makes them feel uncomfortable while online.

