

#publichealth5-19service



Pornography FACTSHEET



Happier | Healthier | Hopeful

This factsheet will provide young people with very helpful tips and links to websites regarding accessing online pornography.

The online world has created incredible opportunities for you to explore, experiment, socialise, create and educate yourself but it has also exposed you to the risk of harm, including seeing extreme pornography.

It's normal for you to be curious about sex and relationships. The internet gives you a way to access information and get answers to questions you may feel uncomfortable about asking friends and family. We know that there are a number of other reasons you may be accessing porn online.

Whether by accident – website pop-ups and misleading links, or because you're actively searching – it's important that you understand the impact pornography can have on you and your relationships.

Pornography is a fantasy, not reality

Firstly, it's really important to note that pornography is made for adults. Secondly, the majority of the time, pornography doesn't show what sex is really like. In fact it's usually very different from sex in real life. People are acting and putting on a performance so things are exaggerated and the lines between consent, pleasure and violence are often blurred. Here's some things to remember about sex and pornography:

- Everyone's bodies and body parts are different – breasts and penises come in lots of shapes and sizes!
- It's ok to feel uncomfortable with acts you see in pornography
- Unprotected sex, which is common in pornography, can cause STI's or pregnancies
- Sex can sometimes be painful or awkward
- It's important to feel safe with the person you are having sex with and it is OK to say no
- Pubic hair is natural. It's your body and your choice whether and how much you keep
- It's never OK to force someone into doing any sort of sexual act

How pornography can make you feel

Watching pornography can leave you with mixed feelings because it's not something people usually talk openly about. You could feel:

- Excited or aroused by what you've seen
- Worried about what will happen if someone finds out you look at porn
- Embarrassed or confused about enjoying porn because you think it's wrong
- Disgusted about liking pornography because it's 'dirty'
- Upset or confused by what you've seen
- Worried about having sex if that is what it's like or what your partner will expect of you
- Angry about how some people are shown in pornography or how it's often stereotypical

Tips for if you're being pressured to watch pornography

Whether you're in a relationship or not, there might come a time when you have sex or when you look at pornography. To help you stay in control, here's some tips:

- Be honest – say how you feel and say what you think is right or wrong
- Talk – explain what you want to happen and what you don't want to happen
- Feel safe – making sure you feel safe where you are and who you're with
- Being comfortable – Say if you don't feel comfortable with anything. Just because you might have kissed someone or done something sexual, it doesn't mean you have to have sex or do other sexual acts.

Things to think about

- Feelings of embarrassment – it can be very embarrassing if your parents or carers find out you look at pornography or if they walk in while you are watching pornography. Having a conversation about pornography can seem a really hard thing to do but it could also make it easier after having a chance to talk it through.
- Pop ups and warnings – If you have been on a pornography website before, either by mistake or These pop-ups can sometimes include tactics to scare you or demand money from you. They do this by threatening to report porn on your computer or phone, you should not pay any fine as these are scams. Always think carefully before giving out any personal details.
- Seeing something you didn't expect too – It's normal to feel curious about sex and to look online for information about it or to search for sexual things. Sometimes searching online can bring up pages and pop-ups that you weren't expecting to see. Some of these things can be shocking to look at as they show child sexual abuse, violent sex or abuse. It is important to remember that it is against the law to have, share or look at sexual images of anyone under the age of 18. If you are worried or unsure about something you've seen please speak to a trusted friend or adult or you can anonymously report a website to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).
- Awareness of online pornography algorithms – Watching any online pornography video will result in suggested videos from the website. Even videos that portray a more 'normalised' scenario will then lead on to more explicit, more violent and more degrading material being suggested due to the algorithms of these websites. You might be unaware of these subtle changes but overtime this will bring in a big shift in the material that you are viewing.
- Pornography addiction – You might worry that you watch too much pornography and that watching it is affecting relationships, school work, family life or hobbies. You can set small goals to watch less pornography, try and replace the time you would watch porn with exercise or sports and hobbies you enjoy. Try distractions like reading, drawing, listening to music or playing games. Ask a parent or trusted adult for help if you can't stop watching pornography as there is a growing body of research looking into the impact that pornography has on the brain. Watching pornography can become "a high" similar to the way addicts feel when they take drugs. Scientists are discovering that excessive pornography use can have a negative impact on key parts of the brain. For yourself, these effects can be greater as your brain is still developing.

A forthcoming change in the law means that all porn sites will be legally required to have age checks, or age verification, in place. These checks will vary across different sites but could include checking credit card details, using a digital ID app which scans your passport or driving license, or entering your mobile phone number.

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VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/

www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-porn/

www.riseabove.org.uk/article/f-a-p-z/

