

# Pornography and kids

FOR CARERS

Pornography can be defined as pictures or videos produced to sexually arouse or create sexual enjoyment for the viewer. These images typically depict sexual activities, descriptions or body parts.

Research indicates that most kids have viewed pornography by 18 years of age. While many kids view pornography deliberately, their initial exposure is often accidental.

As technology advances, kids are accessing the internet at increasingly younger ages. This makes early exposure to pornography more likely, and means that your support and supervision are vital.

## The impacts of pornography

Frequent viewing of pornography can have negative impacts on:

- mental health and self-esteem
- academic performance and social skills
- sexual relationships, beliefs and practices
- gender stereotypes and attitudes
- sexual knowledge or behaviours.

The negative impacts of pornography can be more extreme for kids in out-of-home care (OOHC). Those with a history of trauma, poor attachment and/or experiences of domestic violence are at greater risk. Kids who engage in frequent and/or ongoing pornography use can experience low life satisfaction, isolation from peers and increased concerns about body image. Viewing pornography also increases sexting, problematic and harmful sexual behaviours (PHSB) and injuries to self or others relating to sexual acts. Kids may become addicted to pornography, which leads to continual increases in viewing to achieve positive feelings.

## What can I do?

You can take steps to lessen the impact of pornography on kids, such as:

- providing supervision, rules and boundaries when kids are using the internet. This is essential for kids prior to puberty to limit any possible exposure



- supporting kids to build skills around internet safety and security
- having ongoing and frequent age-appropriate conversations about pornography; internet security; respectful relationships; consent; sexuality; sexual health; peer pressure; and how to respond to accidental exposure to pornography
- encouraging critical thinking by discussing things like:
  - the difference between fantasy and reality
  - the fact that pornography is performed by actors
  - the impact of pornography on real relationships
- seeking knowledge and resources from your caseworker to support your kids. You should also identify other trusted adults who may provide support.

If you're concerned about any behaviours, you should ask for support. Talk to your caseworker and determine the most appropriate next steps.

You can access further resources on responding to pornography at <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/children-and-families/links-training-and-support.html>