

## Has your teen already sexted?

If so, don't panic.

Currently available research does not suggest that terrible outcomes are common with sexting.

Still, education about sexting is very important, even when teens have already sexted.

Make sure that your teen understands the risks of sexting.

Other topics are also important to discuss, including the possibility of sexual activity and sexting because of peer pressure. Teens may believe that sexting will make them more popular, but research shows that that's very rare. More commonly, they may feel upset after sexting, and talking with you may help that.

Look upon a sexting incident as an opportunity to learn from a mistake.



## Do you need more help?

If your child seems distraught or very upset after a sexting incident, or if you feel they need to talk to someone about this topic, there are a few possible ways you can help.

First, talk to your child about what's happened.

Second, your pediatrician or family doctor can refer your child for counseling if necessary.

Third, your child's school may have already offered sexting education and if not, you can suggest that.



# Talking With Kids About Sexting

Read more at:  
[www.MARCCenter.org](http://www.MARCCenter.org)

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## A Guide For Parents

# A Tough Topic



The term “**sexting**” refers to sending electronic pictures to others in which the subject of the photo is naked, partially naked, or in a sexually suggestive pose. It’s a tricky topic to address with kids and teens, because it involves nudity, your values about sexuality and teenage sexuality, and digital technology.

THE GOOD NEWS is that you don’t need to understand everything about technology in order to talk about this issue with your kids. Here’s a commonsense guide to help you start that conversation.

## Some facts to help you start your talk.



### How many teens sext?

**You might hear: “Everybody sends these pictures.”**

Sexting isn’t rare, but it isn’t universal, either. About 25-33% of teens seem to engage in sexting; it may become more common as kids get older.

Both boys and girls sext.

Students who are not in relationships sometimes sext too. There are no signs that definitively show that a teenager has sexted. Research shows that most sexting is never detected by adults, but adults – especially parents – can still have a strong impact on whether or not a teen sexts.

### What are the signs that my teen has sexted?

#### How can I prevent my teen from sexting?

Research at the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center suggests that teens who don’t sext are more aware of their values about sharing nudity, and more in touch with their own feelings of discomfort. That’s important to know, because it suggests that trying to scare kids away from sexting might not be the best strategy.

Instead, **talking to kids about values and personal feelings of privacy might be a more effective way to discourage sexting.**

**You might hear: “Nobody gets prosecuted for sexting.”**

Sexting is illegal, but it’s not often prosecuted. There’s no guarantee, though. Another risk that teens often hear is that the picture may be shown to others. These two risks don’t seem to be as common as many adults believe.

**You might hear: “Nothing bad happens after people sext.”**

Teens need to know that sexting is a risky activity, but discuss risks, values *and* privacy. It’s also important to note that we have no research on the long term results of sexting.