Internet Safety Tips for Parents

1. Create a list of Internet house rules with your children. You should include the kinds/types of sites that are off limits.

2. Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area and out of your children's bedrooms.

3. Talk to them about their online friends and activities just as you would about their other activities.

4. Know which chat rooms or message boards your children visit, and to whom they talk.

5. Encourage them to use monitored chat rooms.

6. Talk to your children about their Instant Messaging list and make sure they're not talking to strangers.

7. Insist that they tell you first if they want to meet an "online friend." It is potentially dangerous for this meeting to take place unsupervised.

8. Teach your children never to give out personal information without your permission when using e-mail, chat rooms or instant messaging, filling out registration forms and personal profiles, and entering online contests. Personal information includes: clubs, activities, schedules, where they hang out.

9. Encourage your children to come to you if they find messages that make them feel uncomfortable or threatened. (Stay calm. If you "freak out" they won't turn to you for help when they need it.)

10. Talk to your children about online pornography and direct them to good sites about health and sexuality.

11. Insist they stay in public chat room areas.

12. Help protect them from spam. Tell your children not to give out their e-mail address online, not to respond to junk mail, and to use e-mail filters.

13. Be aware of the Web sites that your teens frequent, and make sure the sites don't contain personal photos and information or offensive content.

14. Teach your children responsible online behaviour. File-sharing and taking text, images or artwork may infringe on copyright laws.

15. Talk to them about ethical behaviour. They should not be using the Internet to spread gossip, bully or threaten others.

16. Make sure your children check with you before making financial transactions online.

17. Discuss gambling and its potential risks and remind your children that it is illegal for them to gamble online.

18. Ensure your computer is properly protected by using/installing up-to-date security patches, current anti-virus software and a firewall to protect it from intrusions (hackers).

19. Always delete unknown email attachments without opening them. They can contain destructive viruses.

20. Always scan all files that are downloaded to your computer for viruses, even those from known persons.

Signs your child might be at risk online:

- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.
- Your child accesses pornography on the computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from unknown individuals.
- Your child is making long distance calls to numbers you do not recognize.
- Your child receives mail/gifts/packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen when you enter the room.
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.
- Your child is using an on-line account belonging to someone else.