



CHCHD News

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department

Contact: Abena Williams, PIO
(423) 209-8238

AbenaW@HamiltonTN.gov
Health.HamiltonTN.org

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National Internet Safety Month: Protect Your Child from Online Dangers

Many of today's young people are technologically savvy, constantly texting and using Facebook, Myspace, and other social networking sites to communicate. While social networking seems harmless to children and teens, it can open the door to child predators and other dangers.

A survey of 10 to 17 year olds revealed 34 percent of them had posted their real names, telephone numbers, home addresses, or the names of their schools online where anyone could see; 45 percent had posted their dates of birth or ages; and 18 percent had posted pictures of themselves, according to the Pew Research Center and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

"Many young people do not realize the danger of displaying their personal information online. Giving strangers access to their school, home, or work information can lead to a hazardous situation," said Holly Quist, public health educator for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department. "While the internet can be fun and useful, it can also be a tool that people use to stalk, cyber-bully, and commit identity theft. That's why parents need to be aware of what their child is doing and talk openly with them about internet safety," said Quist.

Internet safety tips for children:

- Keep social networking site profiles set to "private"
- Do not give out personal details such as address or school information
- Turn off your webcam after using it so it cannot be hacked
- Do not send anyone inappropriate photos of yourself or anyone else

Safety tips for parents:

- Discuss the dangers of the internet with your child and set ground rules to follow
- Review safety/parental controls on your computer, search engine, email, and instant messaging
- Monitor your child's online activity and the sites they visit
- Keep the computer or laptop in a common area, not in your child's bedroom

For additional information, please call Holly Quist at (423) 209-8282 or visit the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](http://www.fbi.gov/ncmec) or <http://health.hamiltontn.org/>.

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