

Relationships and sex

Sexting: what parents need to know

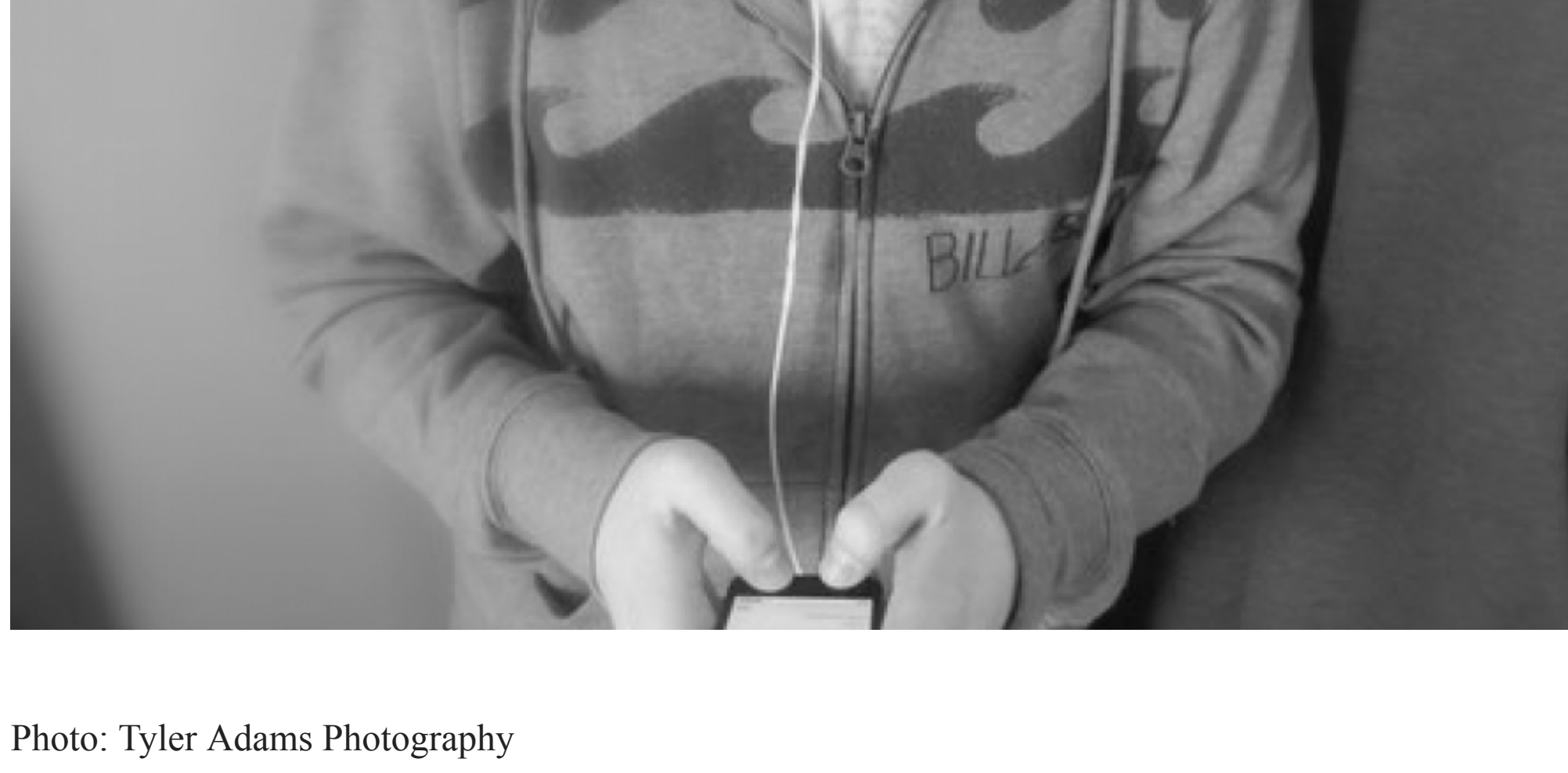


Photo: Tyler Adams Photography

Sharing sexual imagery online (commonly known as sexting) is illegal for anyone under the age of 18, but some children still do it. Here's what parents need to know

What is sexting?

- Exchanging images of a sexual nature with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Sharing images of a sexual nature with someone you like.
- Passing on images of a sexual nature to groups of friends with or without permission.

What should you be concerned about?

Not many of us can look back at our teenage years without cringeing. But our coming-of-age mistakes weren't recorded for posterity. These days young people record their lives on a minute-by-minute basis. The images they create can be copied, manipulated, posted online and sent to other people in a matter of seconds. Ex-partners have been known to pass on images after a relationship has come to an end, as a means of revenge.

- Sexting can be used to bully the recipient, who may not want to receive images of a sexual nature and is made to feel uncomfortable.
- If the subject of the image does not want the image shared, this is known as [revenge porn](#) and is a criminal offence.
- If the subject or recipient of the image are under 18, that is also a criminal offence. Your child is breaking the law by taking, holding or sharing indecent images of a minor, even if your child is under 18, the image is of them and they took it of themselves.
- If these images are stored on a family computer, you, as a parent, could be implicated. Any image of a person under-18 sent may constitute an indecent image of a child, in legal terms, and be prosecutable under the Protection of Children Act 1978.
- The police are concerned that sex offenders search for these kinds of images and may use them to blackmail the subjects.

What can you do?

- Talk to children about the fact that images, once online, are there for all time, and you have no control over what happens to them.
- Urge your child to think before they post.
- Warn them against passing on images of others.
- Remember that it's normal for teenagers to do unwise things. How daft would you have been if you'd had a smart phone in your pocket?

Further reading

[Talking to your teen about sexting](#)

[Sexting and how to protect your child](#)

[Time to get real about sexting](#)

[Educate your child about sexting](#)

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