

## Porn and your teen - The Problem

When it comes to teens, the issue lies less with a possibility for addiction, and more with a dependence on pornography for sexual exploration and development. In short, the internet isn't the best place to learn healthy sexual behaviours. A habit can become an addiction - "we develop neural pathways in our brains when we do something constantly," says Michelle Maliniak, licensed professional counsellor with a Masters in Counselling from the University of Phoenix.

"Early exposure to pornography is stressful for a child's brain," she tells *Parentology*. "If a brain is stressed during development [by sexual and/or violent content], disorders like PTSD, anxiety, depression, and ADHD can result," states Maliniak.

The porn industry is just that: an industry. It's entertainment, for profit, like movies and TV. And, needless to say, **it's not realistic**. Pornography can **distort a young person's view of sex**, setting unrealistic expectations for future partners — and themselves. "I've seen a definite increase in self-esteem problems because of porn," Maliniak admits.

According to the American Psychological Association, the average age of exposure to internet pornography is around 13, and many articles claim it's often even earlier. At this impressionable age, consistent exposure to sexual content can warp a teen's view on **consent and respect**, especially given the amount of **violent and derogatory material available**.

For the health of your child and their future relationships, it's important to **start having conversations** about sexuality, values and morals before free internet use is permitted.

"If children are asking questions about sex, or have access to a mobile phone or computer, it's time to start talking to them about it," advises Maliniak.

If you are concerned about your teen please do not hesitate to contact myself or a health professional.

