



Media and Technology

Safety Tipsheet

Category: Cell Phones

What You Need to Know

Benefits

- Cell phones can make communication within families a lot easier.
- Cell phones can be extremely helpful in emergencies.
- Text messages can be an efficient and discreet way for parents to communicate with their children, especially when they just need a quick answer.

Risks

- The features available for cell phones and other hand-held devices are rapidly becoming more sophisticated. Most cell phones now provide SMS (text messaging) capabilities, access to the Internet, pictures and/or video features.

What You Can Do

- Learn how to use the phone with your child. Make sure your child knows how to dial emergency numbers, handle calls from numbers they don't recognize, and how to keep the phone charged.
- Ask your cell phone carrier about parental controls.
- Monitor your child's cell phone bill. The bill should give you an itemized record of any calls made or received.
- Talk to your child about proper cell-phone etiquette for public phone use.
- Research your school's policy for cell phone use.
- Talk to older children about the dangers of using a cell phone while driving.
- Establish a Media Use Contract with each child in your family. It is important that you have a conversation with each child to set rules and limits that are appropriate for him or her. In your conversation, be explicit about how you intend to monitor your child's cell phone use and what the consequences will be if the contract is broken. Once the contracts have been signed, post them in a prominent place in your home as a reminder.

Visit these online resources for in-depth information:

- Parent Teacher Association, www.pta.org
- CTIA-The Wireless Foundation, www.wirelessfoundation.org/WirelessOnlineSafety/index.cfm

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