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Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

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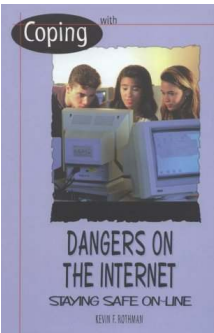
June 2006

Kids Taking Risks on Internet

Joe Pergola, Regional Family Life Extension Faculty

Youth aged 8 – 18 were surveyed nationwide about online activity. According to the Polly Klaas Foundation most parents have no idea that half of teens (age 13 – 18) frequently communicate online with someone they've never met in person. Or that one-third have talked about meeting someone whom they've only met through the internet. Or that nearly one in eight have learned that someone they were communicating with online was an adult pretending to be younger.

All of these practices put children at risk of online predators. Such risk taking, combined with full integration of the Web in the lives of today's youth, means that a simple lecture of parental warning will have little effect on dangerous online practices. Young people need to hear realistic messages about online risks-messages that are based upon their actual online practices.



The poll shows significant differences between teens and "tweens" (aged 8 – 12.) Tweens are increasing their online presences, but they are also more concerned about safety and are less risk-prone than teens 13 – 18. Tweens need their caution confirmed. Teens need to be convinced about the risks and the appropriate safety measures needed to counteract those risks-typically though a wake-up call about how other teens have been taken advantage of.

Most children are more tech savvy than their parents-all the more reason for you to actively learn about what your kids are doing online.

For parents we recommend:

- Learning enough about the internet to protect your children.
- Ask your children to show you how they use the internet. They may not show you everything, but will see your interest-and that you are getting wise to the Web.
- Ask a tech savvy adult to teach you about the Internet and show you how to check what your children do online.
- Asking your Internet service provider (AOL, Yahoo, etc.) to advise you on monitoring and blocking software for home or personal computer. Your local library may also be of assistance.

Tweens (ages 8 -12) are cautious and more open to advice and rules.

For parents of tweens we recommend:

- Keep the computer in a public place with the screen facing out, which discourages prohibited behavior.
- Establish family rules and guidelines, which include never sharing personal information online.
- Reinforce the danger of and penalties for sharing personal information.



- Clearly prohibit any meeting in person with someone the child only knows online.
- Set the expectation now that you will monitor Internet use in order to keep them safe.

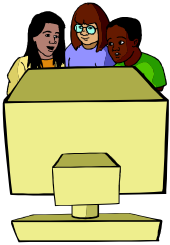
Teens (13 – 18) take more risks and are more independent, and self-enforcement of safety rules is not always realistic.

For **parents of teens**, we recommend:

- Share stories with real examples of teens that have been tricked or hurt because of unsafe online practices.
- Establish realistic rules. For instance, if a teen must meet someone in person they only know online, the smart way to do it is with a parent or trusted adult friend. They should meet in a very public place, and walk away and break off the relationship if the teen has been lied to.
- Reinforce the expectation that parents monitor Internet use and that safety rules must be followed.

Potentially Risky Internet Behavior

- Online teens frequently communicate virtually with someone they've never met. 54% have done so using IM; 50% via email; and 45% in a chat room.
- Two in five online teens (42%) said they've posted information about themselves on the internet so others can see it and contact them.
- More than half of the respondents (56%) said they've been asked personal questions online.
- One-fourth (25%) said they receive such questions weekly, while 11% say such requests come daily.
- Nearly one third of online teens (30%) said they've talked about meeting someone whom they've only met through the internet.
- More than one third of these online teens (37%) said they've received a link to sexually explicit content.
- One in four (27%) said they've talked online about sex with someone they never met in person. And, nearly one in five (19%) reported knowing a friend who has been



harassed or asked about sex online by a stranger.

- Nearly half of the teen respondents (47%) admitted that they've used code words to alert others online to a parent's immediate presence—an effort to disguise a conversation about which a guardian might not approve. PIR = Parent in Room.
- More than one in four (28%) said they use such lingo daily.
- Girls reported more risky behavior overall than did boys.
- Significantly more online teen girls than boys said they've posted a profile (56% vs. 37%), shared personal information (37% vs. 26%), and been asked about sexual topics (33% vs. 18%).
- More than half of these online teens (58%) said they've been asked personal questions (such as their age, sex, or location) online.
- Notably, one in four (25%) said they are asked such information on a weekly basis; and one in 10 (11%) said requests for personal information come daily.
- These teen respondents admitted to frequently communicating online with individuals whom they've never met.
- More than half (54%) said they've used IM to talk to someone they've never met. A third (32%) report chatting with such "strangers" via IM weekly, and 17% said they do so daily.
- Half (50%) said they've emailed someone they never met. Nearly one in four (24%) said they do so weekly.
- Almost as many (45%) have "chatted" online with someone they've never met, 18% said they engage in such chat weekly.
- More than four in 10 (42%) of these teens said they've posted information about themselves on line so others can see it and contact them.
- One in five (19%) post or update their information weekly.



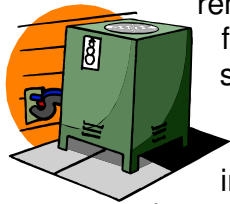
Source: Polly Klass Foundation

Save Energy and Stay Cool

By Lisa Leslie, Hillsborough County Extension Agent

We are now enjoying the hot humid days of summer in Florida. This is a good time to enjoy Florida's natural springs or a day at the beach. After enjoying outdoor fun, it is nice to go home to a cool non-humid home.

During these muggy summer days, we rely heavily on air conditioning systems to



remove heat and humidity from our homes. A good system will keep us cool and also remove moisture from our indoor air. It is important to keep the main components – the condenser and air handler- of the air conditioning system in good working order.

The condenser is the outside part of the air conditioning system unit. You should minimize dirt and debris near the condenser unit. Clean the area around the coil, remove debris, and trim foliage back at least two feet to allow for adequate air flow around the condenser.

The air handler is usually located inside a closet (the ideal spot), or in the garage or attic. Your evaporator coils inside the air handler should be checked every year and cleaned as needed. You can hire a professional to do this or you can purchase coil cleaner from a hardware store. Air filters should be checked monthly. Some filters, such as the fiberglass mesh type may need to be changed monthly. Pleated filters may last 1-3 months.

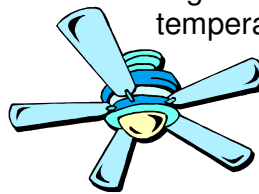
Energy Saving Tips

Turn off the air conditioning system if you are leaving for more than four hours. It is NOT true that leaving the air on while you are at work all day saves money. It costs more to operate the equipment all day than it would to turn the system off and back on again when you come home. If you have pets, plants, or equipment that are heat sensitive you might not want to turn the unit completely off; instead raise the temperature. However, if you are leaving for vacation you will want the air conditioner to cycle on periodically to remove moisture.

Install a programmable thermostat. This will allow you to automatically raise or lower home temperatures around your living schedule. When you're working, program it to a higher temperature, such as in the 80's. Program it to cool to the 70's just before you return home.



Turn ceiling fans off when you leave the room. Ceiling fans do not cause the air temperature to decrease, so leaving them on in an unoccupied room only wastes energy and money.



Keep the air conditioning fan in the automatic position when the air conditioner is running. Keeping the fan running ("on" position) can cause humid air to be pulled into the house.

Every Bowl Has a Silver Lining?

Mary A. Keith, PhD, LD/N

Extension Agent, Foods, Nutrition and Health

Have you seen the ads yet, for plastic storage containers made with silver? Guaranteed to preserve your food, prevent bacterial growth, keep your family safe! If not yet, they're coming soon to an ad near you.

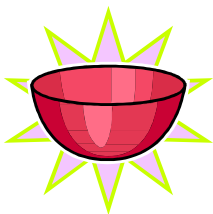
The main questions are: Do they work? Are they worth it? And as usual, the answers are: Well, maybe.

The Facts

FDA has approved the use of certain forms of silver for use on stainless steel food contact surfaces. Silver is toxic, certainly to bacteria and molds, and in large enough amounts to people too. It is being used in some high-end refrigerators, as a coating on the shelves and walls. It's used in some kinds of dairy and deli equipment, such as slicers. The companies are advertising it for lots of other things that come in contact with food.

It will keep mold and bacteria from growing on this equipment. It is, of course, expensive stuff. So these things are not being bought on a whim. But, are plastic storage containers worth their weight in silver?

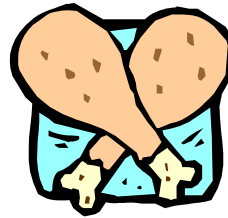
More Questions



Silver is only toxic if the bacteria or mold touch it directly. So, if I put a piece of chicken in a plastic bowl with silver in the plastic, will it only stop the bacteria from growing where the chicken touches the bowl? Apparently! The top of chicken, the sides, any part that is not directly touching the plastic, will not be protected.

Unless - If the silver is gradually evaporating into the air inside the container. Then it will protect the whole surface of the chicken. But then I have to worry about how much silver is evaporating.

Too much silver on the chicken could make it dangerous for me, or my children! And, if the silver is gradually evaporating, then gradually my plastic container is losing its protective value. Eventually it won't have enough to protect me. Then they will just be very, very expensive plastic containers. Will that be in 1 year, or 10 years?



There is also a concern about how different foods affect the silver. Maybe a piece of chicken won't take any silver out of the plastic. But what about a big bowl of spaghetti sauce? Will the acid make more silver come out? If it does, how much will be safe? If it doesn't, then the sauce in the center of the bowl, which is not touching the sides, won't be any more protected from bacteria than in any other bowl.

These are all questions I asked several Food Science professors from the University of Florida at a food safety conference recently. None of them had any answers. Either the research has not been done, or it has not been published yet. No one knew of any research on the use of silver in plastic, how well it worked, or how long it lasted.

So, are these containers worth it? You'll have to decide. How much do you have to spend, and how much you trust the plastic manufacturers and advertisers.



“Take Five” – Simplify!

Diana Converse, Family Life Faculty

Far from being selfish or irresponsible, taking time for yourself on a regular basis can make you a better parent, spouse, worker – and a happier person as well. When you take five to do something you like, brain chemicals are released triggering feelings of well-being.

How do we break the spell and accept the invitation to a freer life-style? Simplification may be the key. You can choose to be “Fast and Furious” or “Slow and Easy.” You must first let go of the attitudes that continually deny your health and happiness in an effort to be responsible. The important thing is to keep working on simplifying your life and finding ways to keep it simple.

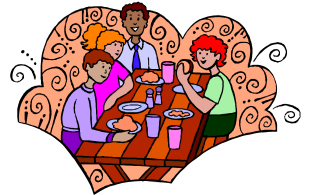
Trying simplifying your work and/or home life with these techniques:

- Set realistic goals; simplify your expectations. Life is filled with foibles, flaws and imperfections.



- Mark one day off your calendar each month to “catch up.”
- Give yourself permission to play; schedule “joy breaks” – fun in small doses. Get as good at planning fun as you are at scheduling work.
- Blend rewarding work and with time for personal refreshment.
- Plan a day to work at home once in a while.
- Schedule a breather. If you live by a calendar, schedule one hour a day to allow some breathing space. “Take five” for yourself. Five minutes away from your work area can have a dramatic effect on you productivity.

- Schedule time to work on specific projects. Give yourself time to work on these things by scheduling work time in your calendar.
- De-clutter. Divide your desk or room at home into sections. Pick one section and start de-cluttering. Try handling things only once. Use three boxes or bags, marking them: keep, give away, and toss.
- Delegate. Stop trying to do everything yourself. Let your spouse and/or children help with family responsibilities.
- Rid yourself of old commitments and goals. Stop to think about everything you’re doing or working towards. Does it still fit your life today? If not, stop doing it or get rid of it as a goal.
- Take a “well” day. Enjoying doing what you enjoy the most.
- Take a one-minute speed whine. Find a friend, set a timer, and take turns whining about everything you can fit into one minute. If you whine fast enough, you’ll end up laughing – the best stress-buster of all.



For most of us, work in an inescapable fast of life – it is the way we obtain the physical necessities of existence. However, everyone needs to renew, recharge, and relax. Only by breaking the chains of busyness can we escape the prison of status quo and experience life.

Source: The Ohio State University Extension, “Take Five.” FLM-FS-22-01.

When your life is full, you miss out on life.

Thomas Leonard

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