

INSTAGRAM:

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



With over 1 billion users, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. It allows users to publicly post photographs and videos, send messages and communicate over public comments.

What are the risks?

Influencer Culture

Ofcom has found that young people often copy-cat influencer behaviour. Sometimes, this means posting age-inappropriate content.

Livestreaming

Livestreaming allows users to connect with friends and followers in real-time. If the account is public, this means strangers can communicate with the person livestreaming and encourage them to do potentially inappropriate things.

Addiction

Instagram is designed to keep its users scrolling for as long as possible. Fear of missing out can keep us scrolling aimlessly for hours on end just in case we catch something important.

Ostracism

If users feel they don't receive many "likes" on their posts, don't gain many followers, or get unfollowed or untagged in posts, this can damage the user's self-esteem, and cause them to feel as though they don't belong.

Product Tagging

Product tags allow users to tag a product in their post, providing a link that takes viewers to a shop page to purchase it. This feature is often used by influencers, who are being sponsored to advertise products to their impressionable audiences.

Unrealistic Ideals

Instagram can often create unrealistic standards by promoting edited photographs or photos from users unrepresentative of the average person. Children often compare themselves to what they see online, so this can cause insecurity and self-esteem issues.

So how do I keep my child safe?

Talk about livestreaming

Have an open dialogue with your child about the risks associated with livestreaming. Talk to them about safety and ensure they have the proper privacy settings enabled so that only people they know and trust can watch them live.

Use moderators

Instagram has a "live moderators" system that allows creators to assign someone who has the power to report and remove inappropriate comments, as well as ban unwelcome viewers. If your child wants to livestream, they should appoint moderators

Follow influencers

Following influencers will help you familiarise yourself with the kind of content they post and monitor what your child is being exposed to. Talk to your child about the influencers they follow and teach them to think critically about what those influencers are posting.

Manage "Like" counts

Due to the impact of "Like" counts on people's mental wellbeing, Instagram has introduced a function to allow users to hide those counts on their posts. It is recommended to do this for your child's profile in the settings menu.

Balance your time

Instagram has built-in functionality to allow you to monitor your use of the platform. The activity dashboard allows users to set reminders to take a break after using the platform for a customisable period of time and to mute notifications. Use these systems to help you have a conversation with your child about the amount of time they spend on the site.

Be vigilant and reassuring

Talk to your child about the use of filters and photo editing. While they can be fun to use, they don't represent the real person. If you find your child is continuously using them, have a thoughtful discussion with your child about self-confidence and security.