

## Social networking sites may provide clues to teens' sexual intentions

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For parents wondering when they should talk to their children about sex, the writing may be on the wall — or on their child's Facebook page.

New research suggests that display of sexual references on teens' [Facebook](#) profiles is associated with their intention to initiate intercourse.

The study, led by Megan A. Moreno, MD, MPH, MEd, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Dimitri A. Christakis, MD, MPH, of Seattle Children's Research Institute, will be presented Saturday, May 1 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

"Parents and physicians are often seeking clues for when it's time to have 'the talk' about sex with a teenager," Dr. Moreno said. "Our study suggests that if sexual content is noted on a teen's social networking site profile, it's definitely time for that talk."

Dr. Moreno's team previously found that 54 percent of MySpace profiles contained high-risk behavior information, with 24 percent referencing sexual behavior ("Display of Health Risk Behaviors on MySpace by Adolescents," published in January 2009 in Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine). The researchers hypothesized that these displays may represent involvement in risk behaviors, consideration of [risk behaviors](#) or just adolescent grandstanding.

In the current study, researchers investigated what sexual displays on [social networking sites](#) represent in the offline world. They identified publicly available Facebook profiles of college freshmen, 85 of whom completed a survey measuring sexual experiences, risky sexual behavior, and for those not yet sexually active, sexual intention.

Researchers found a strong association between display of sexual references on Facebook and self-reported intention to initiate [sexual intercourse](#).

The authors concluded that social networking sites present innovative opportunities for clinicians, educators and parents to identify adolescents who may benefit from targeted education regarding safe sex practices prior to sexual initiation.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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