

Internet porn bad for adolescent health

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Emerging evidence indicates that internet pornography is strongly associated with risky sexual behavior among adolescents, according a review from UNSW's Kirby Institute.

The latest studies demonstrate a strong link between internet exposure to sexually explicit material and earlier and more diverse sexual practice that can result in adverse sexual and [mental health](#) outcomes, according Dr. Rebecca Guy, from the Kirby Institute's Sexual Health Program, and co-authors writing in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

“Young people who reported having visited sexually explicit websites were more likely to have higher numbers of sexual partners, engage in a

wider diversity of sexual practices, and use alcohol or drugs in association with sexual encounters”, the authors said.

They noted that all these factors have been associated with a higher risk of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. They also noted that a comprehensive Australian survey showed that 28 percent of 9–16-year-olds had seen sexual material online.

“The massive volume of sexually explicit material, now easily accessible on the internet, has led to mounting concern about young [adolescents](#) easily engaging with pornography. Some of this concern undoubtedly has a moral overtone, but there are also genuine questions about the potential for exposure to pornography at a young age to bring forward the onset of sexual activity,” the authors wrote.

They noted that a major difficulty with interpreting most research in the field is that adolescents predisposed to earlier and more varied sexual engagement may be the ones who will seek out pornography.

According to the authors, sex education, and open discussion of sexual matters within schools and families assisted young people in decision making, and did not increase the likelihood of earlier engagement in sex, so there should be continuing emphasis on these strategies.

The Medical Journal of Australia is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

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