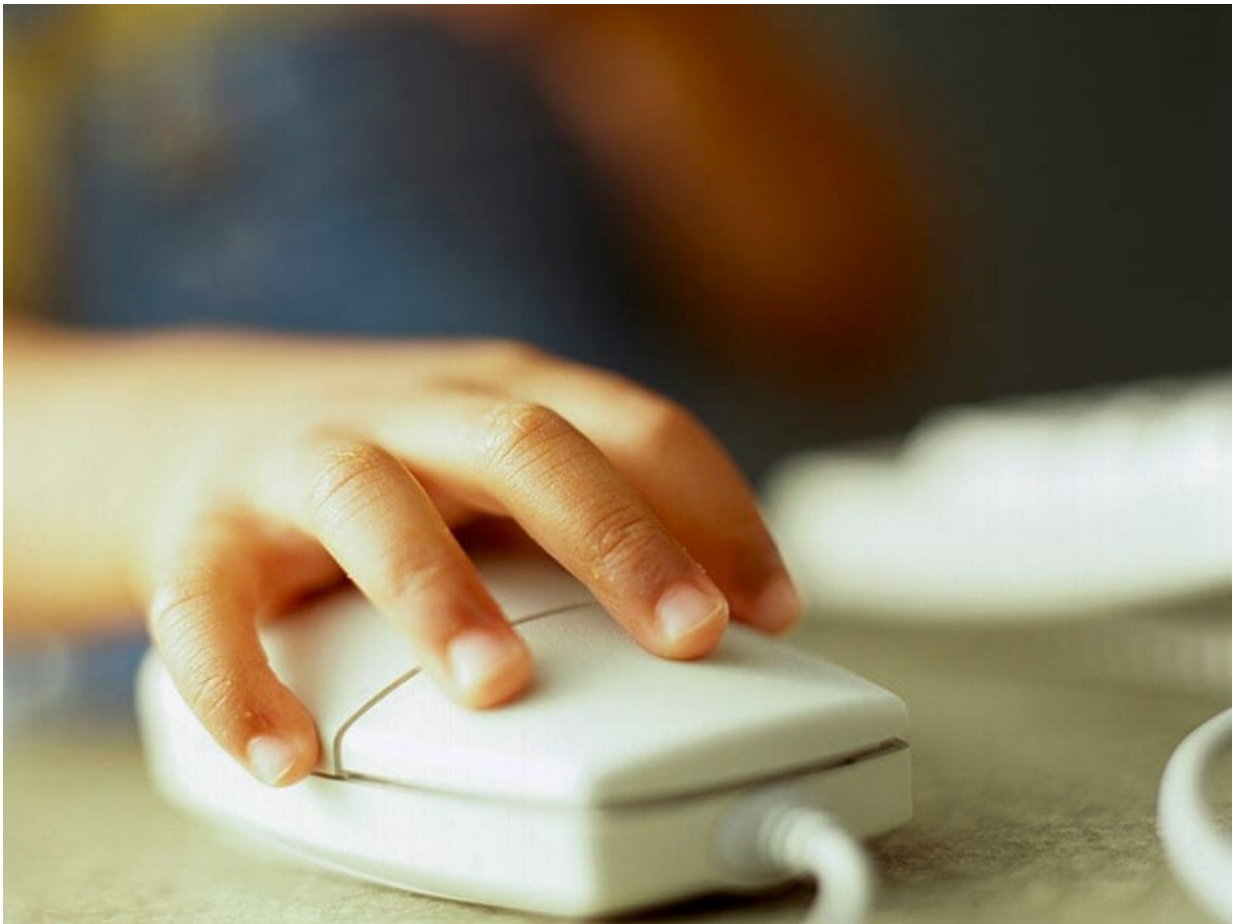# How to keep your kids safe from cyberbullying

March 15 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter

(HealthDay)—No type of bullying is acceptable, but cyberbullying can

be harder for parents to spot because it takes place via cellphone, computer or tablet, often through social media.

Cyberbullying can be a hateful text message or post of embarrassing pictures, videos and even fake profiles of the victim. Victims are often bullied in person, too, and have a harder time escaping it.

But unlike facing a bully at school, cyberbullying can happen 24/7, even when your child is home with you. Messages and images can be posted anonymously and spread in no time. And it can be difficult or even impossible to find the culprit.

The consequences of being cyberbullied are far-reaching. Young victims are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, skip school, lose self-esteem and develop health problems.

What can parents do? The website Stopbullying.gov recommends being proactive—talk with your kids about cyberbullying, including why they should never bully others, and encourage them to tell you about any incident right away. Friending or following your kids on social media may help you know if they become the victims of unwanted postings.

More tips for parents:

- Teach kids not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass them or others to avoid retaliation.
- Regularly check your kids' social network pages to look for signs of bullying behavior, such as mean images of another child.
- Tell your kids to talk to you if an online message or image makes them feel threatened or hurt.
- Encourage your kids to speak up if they see cyberbullying happening to someone else, and not to engage in the bullying by forwarding posts.

If your child is cyberbullied, print and save screenshots, emails and texts for evidence. He/she should not react to the bully, but should block and/or delete him/her from their friends lists. Block the user name, email address and phone number. If your child finds a profile that was created or altered without his/her permission, contact the site to have it taken down.

Report cyberbullying to your online service provider, and go to its safety center to block users and limit who can contact your child. Report cyberbullying that involves a crime to police.

Contact law enforcement if cyberbullying involves:

- Threats of violence.
- Child pornography or sexually explicit messages or photos.
- Any photo or video of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy.
- Stalking.
- A hate crime.

Also report incidents to your child's school. The school can use the information to help with prevention and response strategies.

  More information: Stopbullying.gov has more about cyberbullying and how to combat it.