

Youths evaluated for sexual abuse at risk for revictimization online

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Many suspected victims of child sexual abuse are sharing sexually explicit photos and videos via their cell phones and social media, and are receiving online sexual solicitations, according to a study to be presented Tuesday, April 28 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in San Diego.

Previous research has shown that youths with a history of sexual victimization may be at increased risk for online sexual solicitations, leading to revictimization.

Researchers, led by Corey Rood, MD, sought to describe the prevalence of "sexting" (sending or receiving sexually suggestive messages or nude or nearly nude photos or videos), online sexual solicitations, and offline, in-person meetings with people first met online among adolescents seen for suspected sexual abuse/assault.

Study participants were recruited from youths ages 12-17 years who were evaluated at the Child Advocacy Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital for suspected [child sexual abuse](#) or acute [sexual assault](#) from May 1, 2014, to Feb. 1, 2015. Youths in Child Protective Services custody, those with severe developmental delay or gross motor impairment, and those who did not speak English were excluded.

One hundred and fifty teens completed an anonymous computerized survey that included 40 questions asking about their experiences with sending or receiving nude or nearly nude photos or videos via cell phone,

sexually suggestive text-only messaging, online sexual solicitations and offline first-time meetings with people met online.

Of the 16 possible experiences asked about in the survey, less than a quarter of teens replied that they had been exposed to none of them. "Incredibly, 39 percent have experienced five or more, and 18 percent have experienced 10 or more exposures," said Dr. Rood, child abuse pediatrics fellow, Center for Family Safety and Healing, Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Results also showed:

- About 10 percent of those younger than 14 years, and 28 percent of those age 14 and older have sent a sext picture or video of themselves.
- Nearly 23 percent of those under age 14, and 57 percent of those age 14 and older have received a sext picture or video of another person.
- About 11 percent of those under age 14, and 47 percent of those age 14 and older have been solicited online for personal sexual information.
- About 24 percent of those under age 14, and 55 percent of those 14 and older have been solicited online to do a sexual act.

The above results were similar for males and females and across races and ethnicities.

In addition, more than 43 percent of all teens surveyed met someone younger than age 18 in person after meeting them online, and 24 percent met with someone age 18 or older.

"Adolescents with a history of offline sexual victimization may demonstrate increased sexting activity and be at increased risk of online

sexual solicitations making them vulnerable to revictimization," Dr. Rood said. "It is imperative that we understand these electronic activities in this population as they may warrant unique prevention and intervention strategies."

More information: Dr. Rood will present "Prevalence of Sexting, Online Solicitations, and Offline Meetings Among Adolescents With Suspected Sexual Abuse" from 11:30-11:45 a.m. PT Tuesday, April 28. To view the study abstract, go to
http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view.php?nu=PAS15L1_4540.8

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