



## What You Need to Know About Bullying & Social Media

Technology can be used for almost anything: online shopping, sharing photos, finding a recipe—the options are endless. Unfortunately, it can also be a channel for kids to bully others. Unlike face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying can happen anywhere, anytime. “Mean messages, threatening texts, spreading rumors and posting embarrassing photos on social media are a few examples of what cyberbullying can look like,” says Dr. Padma Reddy, pediatrician at Bronson Rambling Road Pediatrics Oshtemo. “As a parent, it’s important to talk with your kids on a regular basis about how to treat others online and what to do if someone is not treating them kindly.”

### Preventing Cyberbullying

- Talk to your kids about cyberbullying. Discuss which social media sites they are using and establish expectations together.
- Explain that it’s important to be careful about what they post; once something gets published you never know if it will be shared or forwarded to a bigger audience.
- Make sure they understand that it is never okay to embarrass, hurt or spread rumors about anybody. Talk about the possible consequences that may have.
- Remind them that they should let you know as soon as possible if they or someone they know is being cyberbullied.

### Recognizing Cyberbullying

“Kids can be hesitant to seek help if they’re being bullied online,” Reddy shares. “Many times it’s because they’re ashamed or scared that their computer or phone may be taken away.” Although every child may handle it different, signs of cyberbullying can include:

- Avoidance of using their cell phone or computer
- Being secretive about their texts or social media accounts
- Overprotection of their devices
- Behavior, mood or appetite changes

### Responding to Cyberbullying

“If you discover that your child is a victim of cyberbullying, it’s important to respond and resolve the issue right away,” Reddy says. “First, save the evidence of online bullying. Then block the bully and report it to the social media site or web administrator. If the cyberbullying is happening at school, a counselor or principal may need to be notified.”

Bullying should be reported to law enforcement if it includes any threats, sexually explicit content, involves stalking or is part of a hate crime.

*Sources: [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org) and [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)*

*This article is brought to you by Bronson Children’s Hospital, southwest Michigan’s only children’s hospital. For more information about children’s health, visit [bronsonhealth.com/children](http://bronsonhealth.com/children).*