

## Information resources for families

# Social media

### How can you carefully use social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube and emails to share and discuss your child's cancer information?

Social media is a common way of sharing information with family and friends and reaching out to the wider social community to seek and share advice and support. Responsible use of social media is critical to safeguard your family's privacy regarding personal information and information about your child's cancer diagnosis and treatment. There are potential risks and dangers that may not be apparent at the time of posting, but may prove harmful later on in your child's life.

#### Social media includes (but is not limited to):

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, MySpace)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Keek)
- Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- Blogs hosted by media outlets (e.g. 'comments' or 'your say' features on [www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au))
- Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- Wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia, Clouds)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google Groups, Whirlpool)
- Podcasting
- Online multiplayer gaming platforms (e.g. World of Warcraft, Second Life)
- Instant messaging (including SMS)
- Geospatial tagging (Foursquare)



#### Suggestions for parents, extended family and friends when using social media

These tips to responsibly use social media have been compiled from Microsoft's safe blogging guidelines, RCH social media policy and some other reputable websites. They are a starting point and not a comprehensive collection; you are encouraged to include and set your own boundaries for yourself, your child, family and friends. The suggestions are not intended to discourage the use of social media to connect with others, they are meant to guide you to safely navigate through these websites, while protecting your child's information and respecting the privacy of your child's treating hospital.

- Never post any personal information about your child's cancer diagnosis and treatment, hospital UR number, your last name, contact information, home address, phone numbers, school's name, email address, last names of friends or relatives, instant messaging names, age, or birth date.

- Never mention names of any other hospital patients or post photos of those patients.
  - Parents, families and friends should NOT record any information including names or photographs on social websites of the staff at the hospitals who are/have cared for your child. Parents, families and friends should NOT request the 'friendship' of staff on Facebook and other social networking sites. The staff caring for your child are performing the job they have been employed to do – and they should not form part of your social networking circle.
  - Remember that the stories other people post may not be accurate. If you are discussing treatment, remember that everybody's circumstances are different. Never take advice about healthcare from social media. You need to consult your child's doctor for this.
  - Use blogging provider sites with clearly stated terms of use, and make sure the site can protect the actual blogs, not just the user accounts, with password protection.
  - Keep blogs positive and don't use them for slander, defamation, harassment or to attack others.
  - Assume what you publish on the web is permanent. Anyone on the internet can easily print out a blog, photo or post or save it to a computer. If you are sharing private information about your child's treatment and experiences, remember that when the child grows up, they may not want their own information out in the public domain for everyone to see, including future employers, insurance agencies, etc.
- For more information and advice please contact your nurse consultant or social worker.**
- Responsible use of social media by parents, and more so, teenagers, is critical to safeguard your family's privacy.**
- Make it clear to your child that anything they post online is there forever. Even if the site allows you to delete it, you can't stop others from saving the post/photo/blog before you have removed it.
  - Make sure your child knows not to put any information about their diagnosis or treatment online.
  - Make sure that you and your child know about the site they are signing up to. You should go through the privacy policy and code of conduct for the site together. Make sure you carefully choose your privacy settings so that you have control over who has access to your page.
  - Do not allow your child to use their full name or other personal information on social networking sites. This includes: contact information, home address, phone numbers, school's name, email address, last names of friends or relatives, instant messaging names, age, or birth date.
  - Do not allow your child to meet anyone in person that they have only met online. Encourage them to only communicate online with people they already know.
  - Warn your child about the risks of expressing emotions to strangers.
  - Be careful about identifying detail in photos. Explain to your child that photos can reveal a lot of personal information. Encourage your child not to post photos that have identifying information such as medical UR number, hospital signs, school uniforms etc.
  - Teach your child about cyber-bullying. Tell them that if they think they are being cyber-bullied, they should share this information immediately with you or another adult that they trust.
  - Create an open space for conversation about social media. Encourage your child to tell you if something they encounter on a social networking site makes them feel uncomfortable. Remind your child that they will not get into trouble if they bring something concerning to your attention.

## Suggestions if your child wants to use social media

Your child may also want to use social media. Listed below are some suggestions compiled from Microsoft's Safe Blogging Guidelines about how you can guide your child to use social media safely.

- On most social networking sites, the minimum age is 13 years. If your child is under the recommended age, you should not allow them to sign up to the site.

**Don't believe everything you read or see on social media!**