

When Should My Child Get a SmartPhone?

Grade school kids are asking parents for a smartphone. Research shows that on the average, kids age 10 are getting their first smartphone. For most parents, the decision is not an easy one. They want to know – what is the right age for a child to get a smartphone?

Experts agree. There is no set age. Every child is unique. Family situations are different. However, many experts tell parents that there is no rush to get their child a smartphone.

To begin the decision-making process, parents must assess if:

- Their child needs a smartphone,
- The benefits outweigh the risks, and
- Their child is responsible enough to own a phone.

Most parents buy their child a smartphone for safety reasons. Many kids walk home from school. They stay home alone without access to a landline phone. Sometimes kids need last minute rides to and from school and activities. In an emergency, smartphones give kids have access to 911. Parents feel more secure when their children can connect to them or others for help.

Smartphones come with risks. Parents give up some control over their child's life. With smartphones, kids may view videos and play video games without a parent's consent. Phones can be used to harass and



bully. A child is subject to cyberbullying. This harmful act has been the cause of mental health problems – even sui-cide.

Kids can easily receive phone calls and text messages without their parent's knowledge. This includes strangers and

predators. Acting on impulse, kids could send inappropriate texts and pictures. These often end up on the Internet causing long term problems and embarrassment. Some kids admit to being addicted to smartphone use.

Parents have received unexpected large bills due to increased minutes, texts or purchases. It is also not uncommon for kids to lose expensive phones.

If you decide to get your child a smartphone, research phone plans and parental controls. Know your child's school policy regarding smartphones. Find guidelines on responsible smartphone use. Come up with a plan that keeps your child safe.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital
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1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
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