

## THE INTERNET AND SEXUAL HEALTH

# Am I being safe when I browse the internet?

KEY WORDS

cookies | online privacy | trust



The internet is like a bustling city, full of exciting places to visit and new things to discover. But just like any city, it has its corners where a bit of caution is needed. So, understanding the basics of staying safe is like having a trusty map in this digital wilderness.

Let's start by discussing online platforms: always **use reliable browsers**, such as Google Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Opera, and Edge. In addition, stick to **secure websites** (look for "https" in the URL) when you're doing important things online, like banking or shopping as these websites better safeguard your data.

Browsers store information about your browsing history. To maintain your privacy, you can completely **disable the recording of your history**. Information about which and how many users visit a website, how much time they spend on it, and which subpages they visited, is also stored in the browser (or on the computer's disk). The obtained information can then be used by network operators for network traffic analysis and **targeted advertising**. This involves so-called cookies (small data files used for user identification).

- If you don't want to be tracked by cookies, you need to **change your browser settings**. A better practice for limiting tracking through cookies is to set cookie storage only until the browser is closed or to block third-party cookies from advertising systems.

To feel safe and secure while browsing the internet, every user should take the following precautions:

- **Do not use the same password for more than two accounts at once**. You can use Google's password manager functionality to suggest a strong password for you and remember it the next time you sign in.
- Regularly **change your password**, or whenever is suggested by your browser
- Do not provide personal information and **do not send photos to unknown or untrustworthy users**
- Set your profile to **private** instead of public. Like the previous point, this is important to protect yourself from identity theft.

- Turn off access to your **location**
- Watch out for **phishing** tricks – these can be in the form of scams trying to obtain your personal info via email. If you get unexpected emails asking for your details, immediately report them and add them to the Spam folder.
- Keep your **software updated** on all of your devices
- Verify available online information, for example, through a conversation with a trusted person or by **fact-checking online**
- **Do not trust unknown profiles, pages, and groups**

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Your safety on the internet is paramount! If you follow the best practice's we've mentioned above, you can ensure that surfing the Internet will stay a pleasure and not a danger!



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