

MOMO Challenge

We are aware of a concerning internet trend called the MOMO Challenge. Similar to the Blue Whale Challenge in 2017, the Momo Challenge is a viral social media trend with children and young people. The challenge encourages children to contact an unknown person called “Momo” via social media.

What is the Momo Challenge?

Throughout the challenge, children are sent violent and graphic images and texts. If children want to stop the challenge, “Momo” threatens to leak their personal information. Then, the stranger asks children to share photos and videos of themselves completing certain tasks.

At first the tasks are small. For example: face a fear, wake up at weird hours throughout the night etc. The tasks escalate until the final task, which encourages children to kill themselves. WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook are the primary networks for the challenge.

Why should we be concerned?

Children who partake in the Momo Challenge are actively communicating with unknown persons and may be encouraged to self-harm. The Momo Challenge is not specific to one country, it is global. The Momo Challenge can feel real for children and may push them to harm themselves.

Children are exposed to violent and graphic images throughout the challenge. Some children have reported that it's easy to come across “Momo” on Facebook and YouTube and that it's easy to connect with the character on WhatsApp.

What can parents do?

- Ensure they know what their children can access online.
- Ensure children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know.
- Tell their children no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do.
- Use parental controls to keep children safe.
- If children do receive a Momo message, remind the child Momo isn't a real person, Momo doesn't exist.
- The message is computer generated and is most likely an app 'phishing' for information.
- Tell them not to respond, at all. Then block any number that may appear.

Remember:

As with the Blue Whale Challenge, most of the concern arose through the media hype that surrounded the challenge rather than children actually being exposed to risk. However, the constantly evolving digital world means a steady influx of new apps and games which it can be hard for parents to keep track of. That's why it's important for parents to talk regularly with children about these apps and games and the potential risks they can be exposed to.

The NSPCC publishes advice and guidance for parents on discussing online safety with their children, as well as Net Aware - the UK's only parental guide to social media and gaming apps <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Sadly, there have been reports in the press today that children's YouTube videos for both Peppa Pig and Fortnite are being spliced by Momo Challenge content. Please be vigilant.