Instagram is an image and video sharing app that allows users to share moments with the world. The app has a live streaming feature and additional add-ons, such as 'Boomerang', 'Hyperlapse' and 'Layout', which can be used to enhance their feed. Users can choose to add filters and make adjustments to their photos, such as brightness/contrast. To make their content more 'searchable', users can include hashtags in their uploads to make them easier to find.

What parents need to know about INSTAGRAM

LIVE STREAMING TO STRANGERS

The live stream feature on Instagram allows users to connect with their friends and followers in real-time. Followers can comment on the video during the broadcast (which can be turned off in the settings). If your child has a private account, only their approved followers can see their story. It is important to note that they still may have followers that they do not know, which means they could be live streaming to strangers. A public account allows anybody to view their story. We suggest that your child goes through their followers list and blocks people they do not know. An additional risk with live streams is that your child may do something that they regret. This could be captured by a viewer taking a screenshot and further shared around the internet.

DAMAGE TO CONFIDENCE, BODY IMAGE & MENTAL HEALTH

When influencers, celebrities or peers use filters on their photos or videos on Instagram, it can set unrealistic expectations of their own appearance and create feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Children may try to strive for a comparable number of likes on their own photo to an image or video that has been edited heavily.

NEW FOR MAY 2018

IN-APP PAYMENTS

Instagram is rolling out in-app payments for products and services directly through the app. It will operate under the same rules as Facebook Payments, which state if you are under the age of 18, you can only use Facebook Payments with the involvement of a parent or guardian.

PHOTO / VIDEO SHARING

Posting photos and videos is Instagram's biggest selling point, so with sharing images comes risks. A photo which includes landmarks in the area, their school uniform, street name, house and even tagging in the location of the photo uploaded to Instagram can expose the child's location making it easy to locate them. If their account is not set to private, anyone can access their account and see their images.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

Like Twitter, hashtags are also an extremely prominent tool in Instagram and with that, comes potential risks for your child.One person may use a seemingly innocent hashtag with one thing in mind and before you know it, hundreds of people could be using the same hashtag for something inappropriate or dangerous that your child certainly shouldn't be exposed to.

LOCATION TAGGING

Public locations can be added to a users photos/videos and also to their stories. While this may seem like a good idea at the time, it can expose your childs location; this is particularly more of a risk if it is on their story, as it is in realtime.

NOS National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents

REMOVE PAYMENT METHODS

If you are happy for your child to have a card associated with their Instagram account, we suggest adding a PIN which needs to be entered before making a payment; this will also help prevent unauthorized purchases. This can be added in the payment settings tab.

RESTRICT MESSAGES

If your child's account is not private, anybody can message them and reply to their stories. If they do wish to keep their account public, we strongly recommend changing the message reply settings to restrict who can message them.

NEW FOR MAY 2018

FILTER INAPROPRIATE COMMENTS

Instagram announced on 1st May that they now have an 'anti-bullying' filter on the app. The new filter hides comments containing attacks on a person's appearance or character, as well as threats to a person's well-being or health. The filter will also alert Instagram to repeated problems so they can take action on the user if necessary. This is an automatic filter, but it can be turned off. Make sure this is turned on in the apps settings.

TURN OFF SHARING

Even though this feature will not stop people from taking screenshots, it will stop others being able to directly share photos and videos from a story as a message to another user. This feature can be turned off in the settings. We also recommend turning off the feature which automatically shares photos and videos from a story to a Facebook account.

USE A PRIVATE ACCOUNT

By default, any image or video your child uploads to Instagram is visible to anyone. A private account means that you have to approve a request if somebody wants to follow you and only people you approve will see your posts and videos.

Sources
https://help.instagram.com | Nydailynews.com: "The dangers of posting photos online": http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/dangers-posting-photos-online-article-1.1432134 | Theguardian.com: "Does sharing photos of your children on Facebook put them at risk?": https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/sep/21/children-privacy-online-facebook-photos | Childlinedotman.com: "5 things you should know about hashtags and your kids" | https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/instagram/id389801252?mt=8

© National Online Safety Ltd
This is not a definitive guide. Please always check with the app's support information to see if your security and privacy concerns are addressed.