VPN Information for Parents

What is a VPN?

VPN stands for virtual private network. It is a program that allows you to mask your IP address and bypass network filters and parental controls.

There are some legitimate reasons an adult might use a VPN, but, generally, tweens and teens use them to get around limits and network filters. For example, crazygames.com is blocked by Sacred Heart's network filters. When a student connects to our Wi-Fi, they will not be able to access the website. However, if a student had a VPN program installed, they could activate their VPN and use the website while connected to our Wi-Fi.

It breaks Sacred Heart's network guidelines to both install and use a VPN program.

For more info, check out *What is a VPN and Why Does my Kid Want to Install One?* from Family Tech on YouTube.

VPNs can be installed as programs on the computer or as extensions in a web browser.

**Here is how to check for VPNS:**
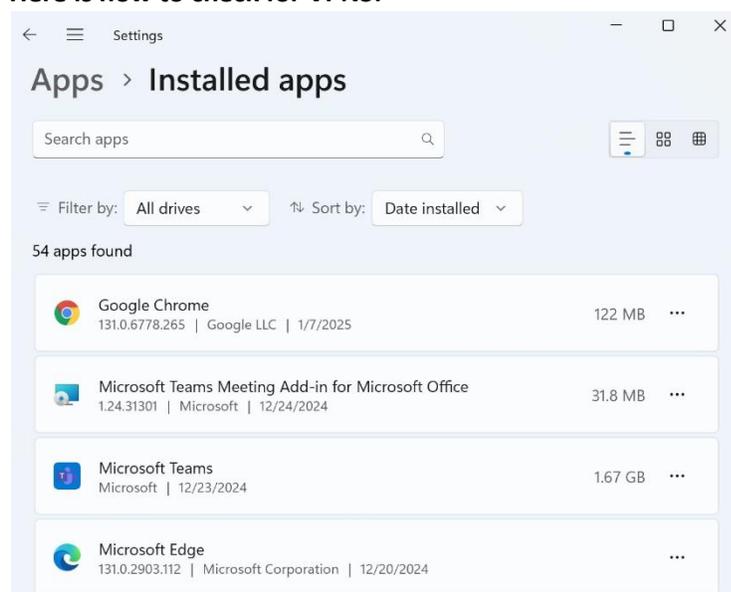
1) <u>If installed as an app</u>, you would see the program listed under "Installed Apps." Scroll through the list of programs and search "VPN."

Look also for browsers that have VPNs built in: Opera, Brave, and Epic are a few common ones. (If you see a program you're not sure of, a quick Google search will help you determine what it is.)

(The pictures show where to search, but do not show VPNs.)

2) <u>If installed as an extension</u>, you would see the program listed under the extension icon in the web browser. (Remember that your student may have multiple web browsers installed. You will need to check each one.)
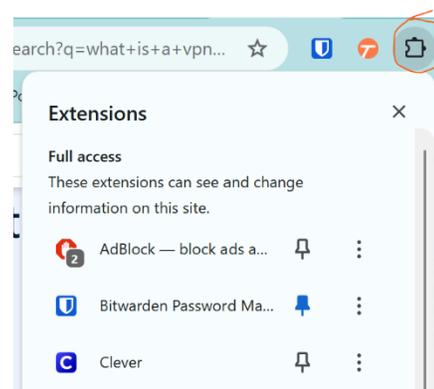
How can you prevent your child from installing VPNs in the future?

In addition to talking with them about the consequences they will face at school if caught with a VPN program installed on their computer, there are a few ways you might choose to go about preventing your child from using VPNs in the future.

1) Let your child know that you will be doing periodic checks of their device and repeat the steps above to check for VPNs.
2) Use Microsoft's free parental control system, Microsoft Family Safety, to limit the installation and use of unapproved applications.
   - One important thing to note about Microsoft Family Safety is that it is only able to monitor web use on Microsoft's web browser, Edge. If your child already has other browsers installed like Chrome or Brave, you will need to uninstall them.
   - Video Tutorial from Family Tech on YouTube.
   - Directions to set up Microsoft Family Safety from SHS parent webinar hosted in 2023.
3) Use a paid parental control system, like Bark, that can monitor and prevent use of unapproved applications across multiple devices and platforms.

Even with the use of parental controls, experts stress the importance of having regular conversations with your child about your family's norms and expectations for device use, as well as continuing to periodically check their device. Unfortunately, there are always new ways to get around blocks and limits.

We are here to help!

For questions or support with VPNs, parental controls, or BYOD policies in general, please reach out to our technology team.

Nancy Schoeggl, IT Director, nschoeggl@sacredheart.org

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Check out all our BYOD resources on our website:
https://school.sacredheart.org/academics/technology/bring-your-own-device