

Tips for Parents to Protect Your Child from Abuse

Nowadays, teaching your children to veer from strangers simply isn't enough. More than 90% of sexual abuse perpetrators are someone the child knows and trusts. Fortunately, there are some precautions you can take to reduce the chance of your child becoming a victim. Make talking to your child about personal safety an ongoing dialogue rather than a single event that might scare him/her.

- ❖ **Communicate!** Talk to your child about their relationships with other people. Ask about how they feel towards different people. Open dialogue with your child will encourage him/her to talk to you about both positive and negative situations.
- ❖ Teach your child the difference between a **welcome** and an **unwelcome** touch. (An unwelcome touch is a touch that makes them feel "funny," "icky," "bad," etc.) Encourage your child to trust his/her instincts. Explain that they do not need to do everything a baby-sitter or teacher tells them to do, when doing so makes them feel funny, bad or uncomfortable. While most grown-ups are good people whom your child should respect, your child should say "no" to doing something when it feels wrong.
- ❖ Teach your child that the parts of his/her body that a bathing suit covers are private parts. Explain that while it is OK for a doctor to touch private body parts, while mom or dad is there watching, in order to keep the child healthy, it is not OK for someone else to touch his/her private parts.
- ❖ Teach your child that if someone is touching him/her and your child doesn't like the touch, to shout, "**No!**" or "**Stop! I'm going to tell.**" Then teach your child to tell an adult they trust. Let him/her know that it's always OK to tell.
- ❖ Encourage your child not to keep secrets from you. Explain clearly, "**In our family, we keep no secrets.**" He/she must know that no matter what anyone else tells them, they can tell you anything.
- ❖ Help children identify trusted adults in their lives who they can talk to about an uncomfortable situation or an unwelcome touch. Children may not always talk to their parents for fear of punishment. Encourage them to build open relationships with other family members or friends who both of you trust.
- ❖ Remove the embarrassment your child feels in talking about his/her private parts. Children should know the correct names for body parts, as well as any nicknames.
- ❖ **ALWAYS** believe your child if he/she reports to you that someone has touched him/her inappropriately. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse (3% of claims). Acting on your child's behalf and reporting the abuse to authorities will strengthen the trust your child has in you.

Learn more. Call (512) 321-6161 or 1-866-88CHILD.