

Let's Talk!

Tips for Talking About Personal Safety & Sexual Abuse with Kids Ages 5 & Under

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Get Comfy and Start the Conversation

From the moment your child is born, you want to keep them from harm and raise them to be confident and capable. Use these tips to start an ongoing, open conversation about personal safety that can protect your child now and lay the foundation for their future safety as they grow.

What You Can Say

“A bigger person should NEVER touch your private parts.”

“You can always say ‘No’ or ‘Stop’ if you don’t like something.”

“Never keep secrets about touching.”

“The only safe secrets are those that eventually can be shared, like birthday surprises.”

“Always ask the adult in charge if it’s okay for another adult to give you something or take you somewhere.”

“If something makes you uncomfortable, you can say: ‘Stop. I don’t like that.’”

“Can you name all the parts of your body? Eyes, ears, elbows, penis, knees...”

“Can you point to the parts of your body covered by a swimsuit? They’re covered because they’re private.”

“Always ask before touching someone else.”

“Listen when someone says ‘No’ or ‘Stop.’”



HOT CHOCOLATE TALK™



1 Keep conversations short and simple

Talk about personal safety and unsafe touches in everyday moments. When reading together, for example, you can point out different kinds of touches and safety situations. And there are lots of age-appropriate books that cover key concepts about personal safety, such as *Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept* by Jayneen Sanders.

2 Focus on teaching basic personal safety rules

As soon as your baby starts talking, you can start teaching the correct names for all body parts. By the time they’re toddlers, they can start to recognize differences between safe and unsafe touches. Teach them straightforward, simple rules like, “Never keep secrets about touching.” Young children learn through repetition, so regularly remind them of safety rules.

3 Teach the correct names for all body parts

Bath time is a great opportunity to teach young children the correct names for all body parts. This is important for a few key reasons: It builds body confidence, and research indicates that well-informed children are less likely to be targeted by offenders.¹ Also, if they are harmed, they can accurately describe what happened.

4 Teach how to refuse unwanted touches

Playtime can be a good time to explain basic rules for safe and unsafe touches and personal boundaries. Let your child know that it’s okay to refuse touches, even if it’s a hug from a relative or an activity that seems fun, like tickling. Practice assertiveness together. Model standing up tall and refusing uncomfortable situations with a calm voice.

IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEED HELP

Childhelp **800-4-A-Child**

National Sexual Violence Resource Center **877-739-3895**

National Human Trafficking Hotline **888-373-7888** or text **HELP** to **233733**.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network **800-656-HOPE**

1. Finkelhor, D., & Dzuiba-Leatherman, J. (1995). Victimization prevention programs: A national survey of children's exposure and reactions. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*(2), 129-139.