

Let's Talk!

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

0-5

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

“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 underwear? 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 unwanted touches in everyday moments. When reading together, for example, you can point out different kinds of touches and safety situations. 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 Teach Basic Personal Safety Tips

By the time they’re a toddler, your child can start to recognize differences between wanted and unwanted touches. Give them straightforward, simple tips like, “Never keep secrets about touching.” Young children learn through repetition, so regularly remind them of the safety tips.¹

3 Teach the Names for All Body Parts

As soon as your child starts talking, you can start teaching the anatomical names for all body parts. Bath time is a great opportunity to teach young children the anatomical names for body parts. This is important for a few key reasons: Research indicates that children who are informed about their bodies are more likely to disclose abuse if it happens.² 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 wanted and unwanted 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.

1. Brassard, M. R., & Fiorvanti, C. M. (2015). School-based child abuse prevention programs. *Psychology in the Schools*, 52(1), 40–60. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1002/pits.21811>

2. Wurtele, S. K., & Kenny, M. C. (2010). Partnering with parents to prevent childhood sexual abuse. *Child Abuse Review*, 19(2), 130–152. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.1112>

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