

How to Protect Your Child

You can teach your children about their bodies and personal boundaries. This can be done with children as young as 2 – 3 years of age.

Naming Body Parts

You can teach your child to use proper names for body parts and explain that certain parts are private (e.g., “They are for you and no one else”). Let the child know that it is safe and expected for them to let you know if someone touches their private parts (e.g., “You should tell me if anyone touches your private parts”). This would let your child know that they should not be scared to tell you. Describe the situations where it is ok for them to show their private parts (e.g., going to the doctor).

Secrets

Explain to your child the difference between secrets and surprises. Let them know that surprises (e.g., surprise birthday party) have a happy ending and everyone will find out about it some time. Let them know that there are bad secrets, particularly those which make them feel sad and uncomfortable. Tell your child that even if the person telling them the secret asks them not to say it to anyone, they need to always tell you bad secrets. You can also use examples and pretend play with them about bad secrets to test your child’s understanding.

Safe and not safe touches

Rather than using the words “good” or “bad” touches, it is recommended that you use “safe” and “not safe” to avoid confusion as your child may think certain touches are bad (e.g., when getting a vaccination) but which is safe and needed.

Explain to your child that any touch to their private parts, and which make them feel mad, upset or confused are not safe touches. Explain to them that not safe touches can be from someone that they know and like, but if it is an unsafe touch, they should still tell you.

* Lee, B. (2017). Online grooming and cyber predators. In R. Manocha (Ed.), *Mental Wellbeing in the Digital Age: Nurturing Young Minds*. Hachette; Sydney, NSW.

* SECASA (2014). Grooming and predatory behaviour. Retrieved January 14, 2019, from: <https://www.secasa.com.au/assets/Documents/grooming-and-predatory-behaviour.pdf>.

Always reassure them that they will never get into trouble for telling you someone touched them.

Adults are Not always right

Let your child know that not all adults do the right thing, and that some adults do wrong things. Tell them that if an adult touches them in a not safe way, they can say 'No' or 'Stop'.

Trust your instincts

Remind your child that if they have a bad feeling about the way someone is touching or treating them, they should try and get away from that person and directly come and tell you.

Protecting Against Online Grooming

Know what your children are doing online

As children lack the life experience to make the choices required to stay safe, parents are encouraged to make decisions regarding **When** technology is used, **Where** technology is used, **What** programs, apps and sites are allowed, and **Who** a child can connect with.

You can do this by:

1- *Becoming 'Friends' with your child on Facebook.*

When sex offenders know that you (parent/guardian) are on their friends list, they are more likely to leave your child alone. Also, having your child have photos of themselves with you and other family members can keep away offenders.

2- *Setting up internet filters and blockers to prevent access to certain*

websites. Parental controls and filters are programs set on a device (i.e., computer, iPad) or account to monitor or control information or activity (do we include a suggestion of a program?).

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- 3- *Having the computer in an open family space rather than in the child's bedroom.* Set clear rules around where technology can and can't be used, both in the house and outside.
- 4- *Explaining and setting boundaries for what information is appropriate and with whom.* Some general rules might include: time limits and curfews for internet usage, an understanding of what language is acceptable (e.g., no talking about body parts with anyone online or in everyday interactions except parent/legal guardian or doctor), and what websites, games and apps can be used.
Also, communicate with your child(ren) about technology to create an environment of openness. For example, have a chat around the dinner table about what's happening online. Also, if you notice an unusual facial reaction when your child looks at a screen, ask them what they saw and if everything is ok.

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