

What is Sexual Assault

-sexual assault involves any form of non-consensual sexual activity

Generally, sexual assault is defined as **unwanted sexual contact**

Sexual assault is an act in which a person intentionally sexually touches another person without that person's consent, or coerces or physically forces a person to engage in a sexual act against their will. It is a form of sexual violence, which includes child sexual abuse, groping, rape, or the torture of the person in a sexual manner.

Explaining Sexual Abuse to Children

Teach children

- The real names for their body parts
This includes private parts so children can talk about things that happen to their bodies in a way others will understand. (breasts, nipples, vagina, penis, bum)
- Not to keep secrets
Tell your children to let you know if a child or adult plays secret games or tells them something bad will happen if they don't keep the secret.
- That adults are not always right
Tell your children to come and talk to you if they don't feel right about something a grown up says or does.
- To tell if something happens
Let your children know that if they say someone has touched them, you will believe them and not be mad at them. Tell them that you love them and will help keep them safe.

Teach children that touching safety rules apply all the time, to everyone. While rules about strangers are important, it is uncommon for a child to be sexually abused by a stranger. Most children are sexually abused by someone they know and trust.

Approach touching safety in a straightforward way. Repeat simple safety guidelines often:

- "If you are touched by a person in a way that you don't feel right about, tell me about it. I will believe and help you."
- "Grownups don't need to touch children in private areas unless it's for health or hygiene."
- "Never go anywhere or get into a car with a grownup you don't know, no matter what they tell you."
- "Trust your inner voice if it's telling you something doesn't seem right."

Establish your own set of family rules:

- "Do not let others know if you are home alone."
- "Your opinion is important when we try a new babysitter or have a problem with a babysitter."
- "Always say 'no' to anyone who wants you to break one of the family rules. I will back you up."
- "You can ride in a car with ____ or ____, but not with anyone else without asking first."

Never force children to hug or sit on the laps of family and friends, if your child is uncomfortable, respect that.

Tell your child that no one should take pictures of their private parts.

This one is often missed by parents. There is a whole sick world out there of pedophiles who love to take and trade pictures of naked children online. This is an epidemic and it puts your child at risk. If you only talk about body safety you might be missing a risk factor. Tell your child that no one should ever take pictures of their private parts.

Play “what ifs” to practice decision making:

“What if you were playing [insert name of someplace you aren’t supposed to play] and a man or woman tried to make you get into their car?”

“What if you and I got separated at the store?”

“What if someone we know really well touched you in a confusing way and asked you to keep it a secret?”

“What if an older person offered you money [or insert name of something the child really wants] if you would break our family rules?”

Help children develop assertiveness. Teach them to respond verbally:

“I don’t tell people that.”

“I don’t want to be tickled. Could we take a walk instead?”

“Leave me alone. I’ll tell.”

“I’m not allowed to do that.”

“No.”

Help them practice responding non-verbally:

Taking someone’s hand off them

Running or moving away

Standing tall, shoulders back, looking the person in the eye

Shaking their head

Adults aren’t always right

Teach children that there are certain things that adults, older children and babysitters shouldn’t do.

“No one has the right to put their hand down your pants, touch your private parts, force you to touch them or touch your body if you say NO

“Most adults touch children in appropriate ways, but some adults are mixed up and don’t make good decisions about touching children.”

“If you aren’t sure about something a grownup says or does, ask me to help explain it.”

Have a code word your child can use when they feel unsafe or want to be picked up.

As children get a little bit older, you can give them a code word that they can use when they are feeling unsafe. This can be used at home, when there are guests in the house or when they are on a playdate or a sleepover.

Tell your child they will never be in trouble if they tell you a body secret.

Children often tell me that they didn’t say anything because they thought they would get in trouble too. This is often reiterated by the perpetrator. Tell your child that no matter what happens – when they tell you anything about body safety or body secrets they will NEVER get in trouble.

Tell your child that a body touch might tickle or feel good.

Many parents and books talk about “good touch – bad touch” – but usually these touches do not hurt or feel bad. Try and stay away from these phrases, as it can confuse a child that is “tickled” in their private parts. I prefer the term “secret touch” – as it is a more accurate depiction of what might happen.

Tell your child that even if they know someone or even if it is another child – these rules are the same.

This is an important point to discuss with your child. When you ask a young child what a “bad guy” looks like they will most likely describe a cartoonish villain. Be sure to mention to your child that no one can touch their private parts. You can say something like, “No one should touch your private parts. Mommy and daddy might touch you when we are cleaning you or if you need cream – but no one else should touch you there. Not friends, not aunts or uncles, not teachers or coaches – no one. Even if you like them or think they are in charge, they should still not touch your private parts.”

**Thank you for your support,
People Vs Predators Association (PVP)™**

What to say/What not to say

There are things parents sometimes say to children when they are worried about sexual abuse that could make it more difficult for a child to tell the truth. Below is a chart that will help you find the right words to talk to your children about sexual abuse.

Tips for Talking to Your Child about Sexual Abuse

As parents we want to say the right things to our children. Over the years at Our Kids, we've noticed there are things parents may say to children when they're worried about sexual abuse that may inadvertently make it more difficult for a child to disclose abuse. Here is a guide that may help:



What not to say	The reasons why	Try saying this instead
<p>"Don't let anyone touch your private parts." - OR - "No one should ever touch your private parts."</p>	<p>Adults and older children are bigger, stronger and usually able to intimidate or manipulate a child. If you tell your child not to "let" anyone touch their private parts, children may think they will get in trouble if touching occurs. Children may be hesitant to talk about the event or may even feel responsible. They may think: "Mom or dad told me not to let this happen. It did, so I will get in trouble."</p>	<p>"If anyone touches your private parts, it's OK to tell me." - OR - "It's always OK to tell if someone touches your private parts."</p>
<p>When referring to your child's genital area or private parts, calling it a "nasty" or "dirty" part of the body</p>	<p>It's important that children of all ages know the names for their body parts — and know ALL of their body is OK. Using substitute names for body parts can be confusing if a child discloses to another adult and uses the substitute name. Avoid names that imply shame or something bad about that part of the body.</p>	<p>"That is your private part." - OR - Refer to the parts of the body as the "vagina" or "penis."</p>
<p>"Has someone touched you?" - OR - "Has anyone touched you down there?"</p>	<p>Don't ask your child constantly about being touched. "Has anyone 'touched' you?" can be a confusing question for younger children. In the literal mind of a child, of course people "touch" them — young children who need assistance with toilet training may be touched "down there" in ways that are appropriate and necessary.</p>	<p>"Is there anything bothering you?" - OR - "Are you OK?" - OR - "Has anyone done anything that worries or confuses you?"</p>
<p>"I promise not to tell anyone."</p>	<p>Before a child discloses, they may ask you to promise not to tell anyone about the abuse or abuser. Your child needs to have a trusting relationship with you and making a promise you'll have to break could be damaging to the child, so don't make one. If there is abuse, it is always in the best interest of the child to report the abuse — and it's required by law.</p>	<p>"I cannot promise not to tell, but I can promise that I will do what I can to help you. Let's talk about what is bothering you. I want to help."</p>
<p>"I'll kill anyone who touches your private parts."</p>	<p>More than 90% of children who are sexually abused know their abuser — often it's a relative, caregiver or friend of the family who has a long-term relationship with the child. While your initial reaction to someone touching your child may be very strong, the child may think they're responsible for the safety or well-being of a person loved by the family. Children are generally afraid of adult anger and worry it's directed at them, so avoid saying things that fuel that concern.</p>	<p>"My job as your mom (or dad) is to protect you and take care of you. Since I'm not around all the time, I can't always know what's happening. So if anyone does anything that makes you feel funny or scared or touches you, it's OK to tell me."</p>

We recommend talking with your child regularly and generally about their activities, people in their life and how they're feeling. If you're concerned something or someone is bothering your child, ask specific questions. Lay the groundwork for open, non-scary, non-threatening conversation and children will be more likely to disclose. If you have concerns about the safety or well-being of a child, you must call 1-877-237-0004 to report your concerns.