

HOT TIPS for parents to keep their children safe.

Things parents can do to keep children safe

1. Talk to children;
 - * Make it comfortable for children to talk about such things -body parts (use correct names), who can touch you, that you are the boss of your own body,
 - * Practise what to do in hypothetical situations. "What if someone..."
 - * Explain things such as that people shouldn't be taking photos of them especially undressed,
 - * Encourage them to identify their feelings so that they know if something doesn't feel right.
 - * Encourage them to differentiate between touches they like and don't like, and what to say or do when the latter occur. Teach them the touching rules,
 - * Explain the difference between good surprises and bad secrets (bad secrets never have an end date, and often no one else is ever allowed to know),
 - * Encourage them to tell you if someone is making them feel uncomfortable, even if that person is a guest in your house.
2. Be informed about what is normal and when to be concerned, particularly about sexual behaviour at certain ages.
 - * Experimentation is okay – young children will play show and tell
 - * Masturbation is normal and healthy, but children need to learn where and when it is acceptable
 - * Kids will explore their bodies sexually and this is OK as long as:
 - * It is light hearted and spontaneous
 - * That it is age appropriate – there is no power issue or age gap
 - * That secrecy is not involved
 - * That it is not viewed by the child as traumatic
3. Have a code for being picked up - only people who know the code can pick them up. (If Mum or Dad have arranged for someone to pick them up and has forgotten to give that person the code, he or she is only a phone call away). Talk about it ahead of time so children know who they can trust, or ask for help.
4. Don't advertise their name on bags, clothes or drink bottles where a stranger can easily see the information, or let them tell people that they are alone.
5. Work through some plans of action with children – what to do if someone approaches them, if they have to call the police, knowing who are safe people to contact and how to contact them.
6. Learn about what they are doing on the internet and with cell phones.
7. Develop some rules that must never be broken, such as not going home with a stranger (say "No thank you it's not in my safety plan").
8. Let them know that sometimes in order to be safe, other rules can be broken, like being rude, or leaving your bike behind. Teach your children how to shout when necessary (we so often tell them to be quiet, we may need to actually show them how to shout). Talk about possible situations when this could arise.
9. Let them know that you will be there for them whenever they need you.
10. Check the child protection commitment of the places you send your children. Pre-school, school, after school care etc. Look at selection of safe staff, the child protection policies and staff training. Think about baby sitters and how well they are checked out.
11. Push for a **Keeping Ourselves Safe** programme at school and in early childhood centres.
12. Don't closet them. Let them take small risks. Small risks are great learning experiences where children can learn to be resilient and to be able to take action if something bigger occurs.
13. **They may not like it now, but they'll thank you for it later.**

Things grandparents and other family members can do

1. Talk to families and your children about your concerns and about the issues especially where there are drugs and alcohol, gang relationships, violence, but also about the relationships that you see.
2. Encourage the children's parents to consider the ideas above, and if they are uncomfortable explaining some of the issues, offer to do this.
3. Take note if your children are living in a risky situation. Watch out for the little ones, and if you can, talk to your children about it.
4. Watch out for signs and be courageous enough to act on them.
5. Get prepared first with information, and know where to go for help
6. Offer to help and support as much as you can and as much as the family will let you.