

REMEMBER:

If someone tries to hurt your child, the child is never to blame.

10

ways to keep children safer.

The Children's Trust Fund leads statewide efforts to support parents and strengthen families in order to prevent child abuse and neglect. As an umbrella organization, CTF funds, evaluates and promotes the work of over 100 agencies. Supported by private, state and federal funding, the Children's Trust Fund invests in Massachusetts' most precious resource: children and their families.

"Sometimes I just don't know what to say to my kids about safety."

– A parent from Weymouth

Children's Trust Fund
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Boston, MA 02108



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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES • PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

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This brochure offers tips for parents and caregivers about basic personal safety skills. Educate your children as early as possible, just as you would teach them about traffic or water safety skills.

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here

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1**Be calm and reassuring.**

Children should learn to be cautious, alert and prepared—not fearful. They are less fearful when they have the skills, information and confidence they need to act on their own behalf.

2**Role-play with children.**

Just as children don't learn to ride a bicycle by talking about it, they don't learn safety skills without practice. Children learn by doing. They need to role-play and see how it feels to say "No" in difficult situations.

- Play the "What if" game and help the child think of responses to various situations. Choose real-life situations such as confronting a stranger while walking to school, getting separated in a crowded store, or playing in the front yard. "What if the babysitter..." or "What if the school bus didn't arrive on time..."
- Have children practice what they should say and do if they feel threatened. For instance, children should learn to yell in a loud voice, "This person is trying to take me. I need help."
- Have children practice staying an arm's length away from someone who approaches them.
- Have children practice ignoring strangers who ask for directions and walking away from them.

3**Review and practice often.**

Children need to review safety skills often. Research shows that safety skills need to be taught five to ten times a year. Review them during car rides and other moments together.

4**Set body boundaries.**

Teach children to guard themselves by setting specific body boundaries. Tell them that their private parts are the parts covered by a bathing suit. No one should touch their private parts; if someone does or makes them feel uncomfortable or confused, it's okay to say "NO", and then they should tell a trusted adult.

5**Give permission to say "NO" and go and tell.**

Explain that there are different kinds of secrets—"okay" secrets and "tell" secrets. Tell children if they are asked to keep a special secret about touching, they should say "No, I'm going to tell." Tell them they have the right to say "no" even to someone who threatens them or to someone they know. (When children are hurt, it's usually by someone they know, not by a stranger.)

6**Teach them the buddy system.**

Children should learn it is always safer to be with a friend or a trusted adult than alone.

7**Teach them to check with others first.**

Teach children to check with trusted adults before changing plans or going anywhere—even with adults the child knows.

8**Help them identify trusted adults.**

Talk openly about whom a child would go to in an emergency. Cite specific examples such as the person using a cash register at the mall, a mother with children, or a teacher.

9**Teach your children telephone skills.**

Teach them your cell phone number and "911" for help.

10**Insist on a child assault prevention program at school.**

School programs, such as **Talking About Touching**, provide children with structured opportunities to practice skills, as well as additional information for parents. Make sure your child's school offers one. For more information, complete the next panel and send it to Children's Trust Fund.

For more information, return this card.

Yes, I am interested in: (Check all that apply)

- Information about **Talking About Touching**, the school-based child abuse prevention and safety curriculum provided by Children's Trust Fund.
- Pre-school Elementary School
- Tips on how to prevent child abuse.
- More information about the Children's Trust Fund and programs such as family education and home visiting for new parents.
- Supporting child abuse prevention by making a tax-deductible contribution to the Children's Trust Fund. (Checks made payable to: Children's Trust Fund.)

Name _____

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