

# TALK ABOUT IT

Talking openly about personal safety and boundaries can increase safety

## Tips for talking with children about sexual abuse

Very few children who are sexually abused immediately come forward to report it. Often, children are too afraid, don't know that boundaries have been crossed, don't have the language to tell you that something is wrong, or know that there is someone they can trust to tell.

Research indicates that parents and children who are informed are more likely to deter an offender, so it is important to have conversations with your child.

### TIPS

- At an early age, have your children learn the proper names for all body parts. Using these words and having your child know what they mean can help a child talk specifically if something inappropriate has happened.
- Teach your child that some body parts are private. This can be as simple as describing that anything a bathing suit covers on the child's body is private.
- Define touch for your child. Avoid using the words like "bad" or "good" touch. Sometimes a "bad" touch might feel good to a child. Use language like safe touches, unsafe touches, confusing or secret touches.
- Let the child know it is ok for them to say no to touches they don't like – and that their boundaries will be respected. You can also let them know that there may be times that it is medically necessary to for a doctor or nurse to touch private parts even if they say no, and that you will be there to help them through it.
- Set boundaries. No one besides the adults you designate should touch your child's private parts – even if your child knows them really well. No one can ask your child to touch their private parts or someone else's private parts.
- Tell your child it is never OK for anyone to take pictures of their private parts.
- Teach children not to give out personal information on the internet (email addresses, home addresses, phone numbers, etc.)
- No one should ask your child to keep a body or touch secret. It is not ok and they should let you know.
- Be open and available to your child to answer their questions about their body and safety.
- Increasing comfort with this topic and increasing communication about healthy boundaries empowers children.

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