

Child Abuse Prevention Tips for Families

- Between age 4-5, assure that children know their full name, home address, parent telephone number, as well as the emergency number 9-1-1.
- Make sure your children have three support people—at home, school, church, or in their neighborhood or extended family—if they, for any reason, cannot talk to you. Display these people’s phone numbers in a designated place in the home.
- Teach and practice safety rules. Learning requires good communication and reinforcement. For example, a trip to the mall or park might become a “teachable” experience in which your children can practice checking with you by cell phone, going to the restroom with a friend, or locating adults who may be able to assist, if needed.
- Teach your children the correct names for all body parts—including genitals, anus, buttocks, and breasts—so that they are comfortable talking about them.
- Explain to your children that they should tell you if anyone is touching those parts of their body.
- Explain to your children that their bodies belong to them and that they have a right to say “no” to touches that bother them or make them feel uncomfortable.
- Advise your children to tell you about any touches that bother them or make them feel uncomfortable or confused.
- Teach your children that secrets they are never supposed to talk about are not okay.
- Tell your children that some people give kids candy, gifts, money, special privileges, or even threaten them to keep secrets about touching.
- Explain to your children that some people do not respect boundaries well, but it is still not okay for them to invade their personal space and touch their body.
- Encourage children to tell you about any scary experiences they have, and tell your child thank you for telling you about this experience, regardless of what the scary thing was.
- Get to know the people your children are spending time with—playmates and their parents, neighbors, childcare providers, relatives, and school staff.
- Pay close attention when someone shows your children a great deal of attention or gives them gifts. Take the time to talk with your children about that person.

Child Abuse Prevention Tips for Families

- Make sure you know where your children are always. Make it a rule that they check in with you when they arrive at or depart from a particular location, or when there is a change in plans. Also, let them know when you are running late or your plans change, so that they know the rule is for safety purposes and applies to all family members.
- Keep open lines of communication with your children. Really listen and encourage them to share concerns and problems with you. Believe what you hear. Children rarely lie or make up stories about being touched in a sexual way.
- Screen baby-sitters and caregivers. Check references before deciding. Once a decision is made, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask them how the experience with the caregiver was and listen carefully to the responses. Consider giving children their baths and dressing them for bed before the baby-sitter arrives. The fewer personal duties you give the babysitter, the better.
- Be aware of changes in your children's behaviors or attitudes, which may indicate that something may be troubling them. Children may be uncomfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings, perhaps because they are concerned about your reaction to their problems.
- If your child discloses abuse, do not convey your own upset feelings. Strive to remain calm, noncritical, and nonjudgmental. Tell your children that they are doing the right thing by telling you. Health care providers and/or Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) personnel can advise you with the best way to assist your children and family.