

My Body Safety:



preventing grooming and sexual abuse

a guide for parents

Most parents teach their children water safety and road safety from a very young age. But how about BODY safety? It is very important to help our children understand how to protect themselves and to identify and respond to sexual abuse. The sooner we start educating kids to create boundaries and to be aware of risks, the better we are protecting them and preventing abuse.

Key body safety principles

1. Ensure your child can name their body parts correctly, including their private parts. For younger children, you can explain that their private parts are the ones under their bathing suit. Tell them that no one should touch or ask to see their private parts.
2. Discourage keeping of secrets – perpetrators often gain a child's trust and then ask them to keep secrets about what they do together. Teach your child that they should never keep a secret from their family, especially if it is about their private parts.
3. Teach your child that no one should show them photos or videos of private parts, nor show the child their own private parts. Encourage your child to let you know if this happens.
4. My body, my rules – Tell your child that it is okay to say 'no' if they do not want someone touching their body. They have the right to refuse to kiss or hug someone, even if they are a family member.

Myths and facts

myth: Children are mostly abused by strangers

fact: in most cases, children and their families know the abuser

myth: Only girls can be victims of sexual abuse

fact: Both girls and boys experience abuse

myth: All sexual abuse perpetrators are men

fact: Both males and females can be offenders

myth: Children always know when they have been abused

fact: Children do not always have the language or experience to understand what happened to them

myth: Only adults perpetrate sexual abuse

fact: Teenagers can also perpetrate sexual abuse

myth: Sexual abuse always involves touching and intercourse

fact: some non-contact sexual abuse include: exposing children to pornographic content, exposing genitals to the child, secretly observing or recording a child in a private situation, amongst other acts

Five trusted adults

Unfortunately, sexual abuse might happen by the hands of a family member or someone your child knows well. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2022) 86% of people who disclosed suffering sexual abuse as a child knew the perpetrator.

This means that it is important for your child to have 5 trusted adults that they can talk to if they are sad, scared or they need to talk about their body safety. Ensure that your child can easily reach out and communicate with at least one of their trusted adults if they need.

If your child discloses abuse

if a child or young person has revealed to you that they have been or are being abused, it is a sign that they trust you and that simply speaking to you will be helpful. It is important to listen in a supportive and non-judgemental way, as the child might be feeling vulnerable and under stress as they recount their experience. It is critical for children to be believed and supported following a disclosure of abuse. A dismissive or unsupportive response may further traumatise the child and prevent them from speaking up and asking for help.

Reach out for help

Child Abuse Squad (WA Police)

Report child abuse by calling 131 444 or
Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000
police.wa.gov.au/Your-Safety/Child-Abuse

Child Protection Crisis Care Helpline – (08) 9223 1111

or Country free call 1800 199 008.
Phone information and counselling service for people in crisis needing urgent help.

Child Protection Unit (Perth Children's Hospital) – (08) 6456 4300

24-hour medical, forensic, social work and therapeutic service for children up to the age of 16 years who may have experienced some form of abuse.
pch.health.wa.gov.au/our-services/child-protection-unit

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Free confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia.
kidshelpline.com.au

Safe4Kids

Child protection education teaching kids how to identify unsafe situations and seek help for schools and parents.
safe4kids.com.au

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

Free service located in Perth Providing crisis services and counselling to people who have experienced sexual assault
Call 1800 199 888 - free from landlines - between 8:30am and 11pm, any day of the week. To request an appointment, call (08) 6458 1828 between 8:30am to 4:30pm from Monday to Friday