



**TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT
BODY SAFETY & AUTONOMY**

The Purpose:

To protect children from sexual abuse, teach them to understand, respect, and communicate about their bodies in safe, age-appropriate ways. Parents, teachers, and caregivers should:

1. Start Early and Keep the Conversation Ongoing

- Discuss body safety with children by ages 2 or 3 using simple and clear language.
- Make it a part of everyday life.
- Revisit the topic regularly as the child grows.

Example: "Your body belongs to you. No one is allowed to touch it without your permission."

2. Use the Correct Names for Body Parts

- Teach children the proper names for private parts.
- Avoid nicknames or code words so children can clearly report inappropriate touch.
- Normalise using these words: they are not "bad" or "shameful".

Example: "Just like you have eyes and elbows, you also have a penis/vulva. Those are private parts."

3. Explain What "Private" Means

- Teach children that private parts are the areas covered by a swimsuit.
- Explain that no one should touch or look at those parts except for health or hygiene reasons, and only with a parent or caregiver present.
- Emphasise that this rule applies to everyone, even people they know.

Example: "If anyone tries to touch your private parts or asks you to touch theirs, say 'no,' leave, and tell me right away."

4. Teach the Concept of "Body Autonomy"

- Reinforce that every person has the right to decide what happens to their body.
- Teach children to say "no" to uncomfortable hugs, kisses, or touch, even from family.
- Model this respect: ask permission before tickling, hugging, or assisting with clothing.

Example: "Would you like a hug or a wave goodbye today?"

To teach consent and empower choice.

5. Differentiate Between "Safe Touch" and "Unsafe Touch"

- Safe touch: You feel cared for and respected (e.g., a high five, a comforting hand on the shoulder).
- Unsafe touch: You feel scared, confused, and uncomfortable. It involves private parts.
- Trust your feelings. Tell a trusted adult.

Example: "Safe touches make you feel loved. Unsafe touches make you feel yucky or confused."

6. Encourage Open Communication Without Shame

- Assure children they can always talk to you about uncomfortable stuff.
- React calmly and supportively when they come to you. Don't scold or show anger.
- Praise them for speaking up.

Example: "Thank you for telling me. You did the right thing. I'm proud of you for speaking up."

7. Build a Circle of Safety

- Identify three to five trusted adults your kids can go to if they feel unsafe.
- Ensure that these adults are trustworthy and committed to protecting them.
- Teach children to keep reporting until someone helps.

Example: "If one person doesn't help, you keep telling another grown-up until someone does."

8. Teach About Secrets vs. Surprises

- Surprises are meant to be shared (like a birthday gift).
- Secrets about hurting or inappropriate touching should not be kept.
- Encourage children to tell you about any secret someone asks them to keep.

Example: "If someone says, 'Don't tell your parents,' that's a bad secret. You should always tell me."

9. Use Everyday Moments for Learning

Use bath time, doctor visits, or TV shows as teachable opportunities to reinforce these lessons.

Role-play scenarios:

*Examples: "What would you do if someone tried to touch you wrongly?"
Who would you tell?" Repetition builds confidence.*

10. Lead by Example

- Respect children's touch choices; don't force affection.
- Model respectful consent in adult relationships.
- Immediately address inappropriate behaviour or jokes.

11. Collaborate Across the Community

- Schools, churches, and community groups should teach body safety.
- Train teachers and caregivers to recognise and report signs of abuse.
- Create a protective culture where adults stay alert, approachable, and accountable.

12. Key Messages to Reinforce with Children

- ✓ Your body belongs to you.
- ✓ You have the right to say no.
- ✓ Don't hide secrets about touching; always tell.
- ✓ If someone hurts or scares you, it's never your fault.
- ✓ You can always talk to me, no matter what.

Understanding body safety and autonomy lowers a child's risk of harm.

Addressing these topics fosters trust, confidence, and resilience, and saves lives.



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