

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT BODY SAFETY

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Just as we teach children about road safety and 'stranger danger', it's important to teach our children about body safety. Statistically, children are at greater risk of sexual abuse than being hit by a car or abducted by a stranger. Yet this is a subject which parents are often reluctant to talk about with their children.

Here are some tips that you might find helpful when speaking with your young children about body safety:

- Teach your children the **correct anatomical names** for his/her body parts.
- Explain that there are **parts of our bodies which are private**, and just for us. These include our genitals, bottoms and mouths.
- Educate your children to **not let anyone touch these private parts** of their bodies or to touch another person's private parts, even if they ask them to. (There may be medical exceptions in which children need to let others touch certain parts of their bodies, but Mum or Dad will then be present).
- Teach your children that **their bodies belong to them**. No-one can ever make them do something with their bodies that they don't feel good about. This includes adults.
- Explain to your children what they can do if anyone ever tries to touch the parts of their bodies that are just for them: They can say no, shout out or run away if needed, then go straight to a trusted adult to tell them what happened.
- Don't encourage your children to keep secrets. Instead, teach them that the only secrets that we should keep are happy surprises, such as birthday gift purchases or upcoming surprise party details. Secrets which make children feel bad or uncomfortable shouldn't be secrets at all. Your children need to know that they can tell you anything and you will always do your best to help.

- **Books:** There are some great children's books which have been written on the subject of body safety, including 'Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept', 'My Body Belongs to Me' and 'Everyone's Got a Bottom'. Books such as these can provide a great starting point for these conversations.



To find out more about Dr Kaylene Henderson and her popular resources, go to: www.drkaylenehenderson.com. Or to download her online Advice Packs on a range of topics such as anxiety, resilience, school readiness and tantrums, head to A Dose of Awesomeness: www.adoseofawesomeness.com.