

# Tips for Teaching Children Personal Safety Skills

Keeping children safe and healthy is everyone's responsibility.

Children need to be taught that their bodies are their own, and that they have the right to say "NO" when it comes to who touches them and whom they touch. If children are ever touched in way that is confusing or frightening to them, they need to be taught that they can tell someone about the touch. They need to be taught that they have the right to feel safe and be safe. It is important that adults teach children to **SAY "NO," GET AWAY, and TELL A TRUSTED ADULT HELPER.**

The key to effective training is repetition and active rehearsal. Children need to practice saying no, getting away and telling a trusted adult helper. While it is great to teach children that they have the right to "SAY NO, GET AWAY, AND TELL", it should not stop there. All children are vulnerable and should not be held responsible for their own personal safety. Educating yourself, as well as other adults in children's care, on bullying, child abuse and child sexual abuse prevention and awareness, is essential to the safety of all children.

The following are additional tips that can help you teach effective personal safety to children:

1. **Assure children that most touches are OK touches and most people are good people.** But if someone touches their private parts in a secret way, or if they experience a touch that scares or confuses them, they can **SAY "NO," GET AWAY, and TELL SOMEONE.** Remember that if children receive a NOT OK touch from someone they know or care about, like a relative or a babysitter, they may not be able to say "NO" or even get away. However, they can tell someone. Emphasize the importance of telling a helper and if the helper doesn't believe them, keep on telling until someone listens and believes them. Let children know it's OK to question or challenge adults, when something doesn't seem right, especially touches. Assure them that adults are not always right. Teach them there are things that adults should never do.
2. **Teach children the correct names for body parts.** Just as they have arms and legs, they have a penis or vagina and anus. Children can't tell you if they've received a NOT OK touch if they don't have the words to describe the touch.
3. **Teach children how to use body language.** Have them practice standing tall and saying "NO" in a loud, strong voice. Help children develop good eye contact.
4. **Play "what if" games with children.** You can use the role-play scenarios found in the back of this packet or create your own. Develop "what if" situations that are pertinent to your own family. One of the purposes of "what if" games is to stress to children the importance of always getting mom or dad's/guardian's permission before going anywhere.
5. **Show children safe places and people to go if they ever get lost;** for example, a person behind a register in a store. Have a written list of people who the child knows it is OK to go with. Share the list with the child's school, daycare and baby sitter. Stress to your child the importance of ALWAYS getting permission before going ANYWHERE with ANYONE, even if the person is known by you.

These "Tips for Teaching Children Personal Safety Skills" are based upon information from Red Flag/Green Flag Resource Center of Fargo/Moorhead