

Child Safety Tips

Courtesy of Edmonton Police Service

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Ontario is one of the safest places in the world to live, work and play, to help make it an even safer place for our children, these safety tips have been compiled to help prepare both parents and children to deal with threatening situations.

REMEMBER, while very few children are actually at risk, you should not allow your child to become vulnerable to risks that can be avoided.

The following tips will not completely protect your child, however, they will increase the level of awareness.

This page has been designed to present the information to your children in a non-threatening manner; please adopt this style as you discuss personal safety with your child. Remember to teach your children according to their age and ability to understand.

PARENT'S GUIDE TO YOUR CHILD'S PERSONAL SAFETY: ALWAYS TEACH YOUR CHILDREN:

- To know their full name, age, telephone number, area code, city and province.
- How to phone long distance in an emergency, by dialing direct or with the operators assistance.
- How to contact you, or another close relative in an emergency. How to contact a trusted neighbor, police, fire or ambulance services and when to make these calls.
- When children are home alone they should tell phone callers that you are there, but you are busy and cannot come to the phone. The phoning party can call back later. Teach your child to cut short any phone calls with strangers and hang up the telephone if a stranger continues to talk.
- When children are home alone, find out the identity of the person who comes to the door, without opening the door. If a stranger is at the door, teach your children to tell the stranger that you are busy, and he/she should go away and come back later. Teach your child not to engage in conversation with the visitor. If the child feels threatened, teach him to phone an emergency number. Emergency numbers could be your telephone number at work, that of the police or a trusted neighbor who will be home.
- Where possible, your children should play and walk with other children.

- Your children should always ask your permission before accepting gifts from strangers.
- To avoid situations where strangers may approach your child alone, such as an unsupervised play area, empty lots, abandoned buildings, bushy area of parks, creeks and riverbeds.
to run home or to the nearest public place, or a Block Parent home, if someone is following or frightening your child.
- If someone follows your child in a car, they should turn around and get away. Run home or to a Block Parent home or the nearest public place such as a school, store, or office. Your child should also try to remember what the driver and car looked like or its license number.
- That adults, especially strangers, rarely ask children for help in finding things, or for directions. Explain to your child that both men and women are strangers.
- If your child becomes separated from you in a store or shopping mall, to go directly to a store employee or cashier for help.
- That police officers who wear uniforms are their friends and that they can be trusted if your child is in trouble. It is for this reason that you should never use the police as a threat to your child. This will confuse their image of the police.

TEACH YOURSELF:

- To provide the school or daycare centre with the names of persons to whom your child may be released. Inform the school or daycare centre of whom to notify if your child does not arrive at school, including an emergency number if you cannot be reached.
- To make a quick mental note of your child's clothing each day to aid in the search if your child becomes lost.
- To maintain up-to-date records which include a recent photograph of your child, his height and weight, medical and dental histories, and if you wish a video tape and fingerprint records. These records are valuable tools if your child becomes lost.
- To avoid clothing and toys which prominently display your child's name. Children are less likely to fear a stranger who knows their name.
- To interview and check with other parents to ensure all potential baby sitters are trustworthy.
- To know all of your children's friends, their families and their phone numbers. Insist that your child ask for permission to visit his friends.
- If your child must use the washroom in a public place, always accompany him, or ask another adult whom you trust to take him. Your child should never play or loiter near public washrooms or public changing rooms.
- To accompany your child door-to-door activities, such as Halloween or school fund raising campaigns.
- Pre-school children should never be left alone or be unsupervised in or out of the home.
- Your children should always ask permission of you, a guardian or a teacher before they accept rides with strangers. Use a pre-selected secret code word with your

child, and those whom you may ask to give your child a ride. Where necessary, change the code word with your child after it has been used for a period of time, or in those situations where it may become known by persons who do not have a need to know.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:

ALWAYS TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

- The proper name of their body parts. Teach them that certain parts of their bodies are private. Nobody has a right to touch them without your permission. Use the example of a bathing suit to help your child understand what the private parts of the body are.
- Discuss sexual abuse in an open and sincere manner with your child in the same way as you would discuss other safety guidelines. This way you will bring this subject to your child's attention without causing any unnecessary fear.
- Use family activities such as "what if" games that help your child think about new kinds of situations that could occur and make your child more confident of his abilities to handle those situations.
- Continually reinforce your love and concern for your child, regardless of things that may happen to them or things they might do. This applies equally to the child's general safety and any incidence of sexual abuse.

WHEN YOU TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE,

ALWAYS TELL THEM

- Your body is your own and you don't have to let ANYONE touch you or hurt you. "If someone does this say "NO" or "you are not my parent" and "always tell me who touched or tries to touch you."
- "You have my permission to say "NO" or "don't touch me that way" to any person especially if that person wants to do something that makes you uncomfortable."
- "If you get uncomfortable FEELINGS when someone does something to you or asks you to do something to them, come and tell me."
- "Sometimes nice people-people you know-do things that are not nice. Respecting and "Obeying" adults does not mean that you have to do everything they ask. If you think what they are doing or asking is wrong, come and tell me."
- Some secrets-like surprise parties-are fun, but a secret that another adult say only the two of you can know is not right-come and tell me."
- "Always tell me if these things happen to you, because I love you and I want you to be safe."

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED, LET YOUR CHILD KNOW

- You know what he or she tells you.
- You are not angry with him or her and display your continued love for them.
- He or she is not responsible for the incident, regardless of the circumstances.
- You will do everything you can to protect him or her from further abuse by the offender.

A CHILD IS MISSING: A WHAT-TO-DO CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

- Make a careful search of your home and surrounding properties.
- Check with playmates.
- Check favorite play areas.
- Call or visit local police stations, be prepared to give the following information:
- Full physical description
- Birth marks or other identification marks
- Most recent photograph
- Fingerprint record
- Description of clothing worn at time of disappearance
- Medical problems
- Recent problems at home, school, with playmates, etc.
- Possible or probable abduction by spouse or former spouse
- Possible runaway, because favorite clothes, possessions are missing

HOW YOU CAN BECOME INVOLVED IN CHILD SAFETY

- Get to know the BLOCK Parents in your neighborhood.
Join the local Neighborhood Watch Program.
- Build a home information centre, when includes a map of your neighborhood and its play area, and have your child identify where he will be at all times and when he will return.
- List telephone number of neighbors and relatives whom you trust and can be contacted in case of emergency.
- List other important telephone numbers, such as Fire, Police, Ambulance, and explain to your child when they should be called.
- Design a "Growth chart" and record your child's height regularly.