PROTECTING YOUR CHILD AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

- ✔ Let your child know that he or she can tell you anything, and that you'll be supportive.
- ✔ Teach your child that no one — not even a teacher or a close relative — has the right to touch him or her in a way that feels uncomfortable, and that it's okay to say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult.
- ✔ Don't force kids to kiss or hug or sit on a grown-up's lap if they don't want to. This gives them control and teaches them that they have the right to refuse.
- ✔ Always know where your child is and who he or she is with.
- ✔ Tell your child to stay away from strangers who hang around playgrounds, public restrooms, and schools.
- ✔ Be alert for changes in your child's behavior that could signal sexual abuse such as sudden secretiveness, withdrawal from activities, refusal to go to school, unexplained hostility toward a favorite babysitter or relative, or increased anxiety. Some physical signs of abuse include bedwetting, loss of appetite, venereal disease, nightmares, and complaints of pain or irritation around the genitals.
- ✔ If your child has been sexually abused, report it to the police or a child protection agency immediately.

If your child is a victim of any crime, from stolen lunch money to sexual abuse, don't blame him or her. Listen and offer sympathy.

TAKE A STAND!

- ✔ Work with schools and recreation centers to offer study time, activities, tutoring, and recreation before and after school.
- ✔ Start a school callback program. When a student—elementary, middle or high school age—doesn't arrive as scheduled, volunteers at the school call the parents to make sure the absence is excused.
- ✔ Volunteer to help with a McGruff House* or other block parent program. If you can't offer your home as a haven for children in emergencies, you can help in other ways—telephoning, fundraising, or public relations.

* A McGruff House is a reliable source of help for children in emergency or frightening situations. Volunteers must meet specific standards, including a law enforcement records check. Programs are established locally as a partnership among law enforcement, schools, and community organizations. For information call 801-486-8768.

Crime Prevention Tips from
National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20006-3817
and

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Web Site: www.lasd.org

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RAISING STREETWISE KIDS
A Parent's Guide

WOULD YOUR CHILD KNOW WHAT TO DO IF —

- ✔ He got lost at a shopping mall?
- ✔ A nice-looking, friendly stranger offered her a ride home after school?
- ✔ A friend dared him to drink some beer or smoke a joint?
- ✔ The babysitter or a neighbor wanted to play a secret game?

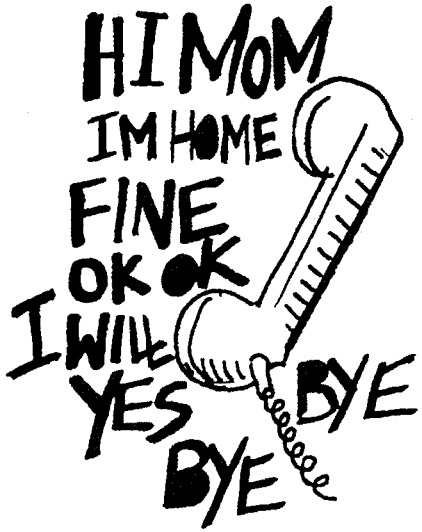
A great thing about kids is their natural trust in people, especially in adults. It's sometimes hard for parents to teach children to balance this trust with caution. But kids today need to know common-sense rules that can help keep them safe — and build the self-confidence they need to handle emergencies.

START WITH THE BASICS

- ✔ Make sure your children know their full name, address (city and state), and phone number with area code.
- ✔ Be sure kids know to call 9-1-1 or "0" in emergencies and how to use a public phone. Practice making emergency calls with a make-believe phone.
- ✔ Tell them never to accept rides or gifts from someone they and you don't know well.
- ✔ Teach children to go to a store clerk, security guard, or police officer for help if lost in a mall or store or on the street.
- ✔ Set a good example with your own actions — lock doors and windows and see who's there before opening the door.
- ✔ Take time to listen carefully to your children's fears and feelings about people or places that scare them or make them feel uneasy. Tell them to trust their instincts.

AT SCHOOL AND PLAY

- ✔ Encourage your children to walk and play with friends, not alone. Tell them to avoid places that could be dangerous — vacant buildings, alleys, playgrounds or parks with broken equipment and litter.



- ✔ Teach children to settle arguments with words, not fists, and to walk away when others are arguing. Remind them that taunting and teasing can hurt friends and make enemies.
- ✔ Make sure your children are taking the safest routes to and from school, stores, and friends' houses. Walk the routes together and point out places they could go for help.
- ✔ Encourage kids to be alert in the neighborhood, and tell an adult — you, a teacher, a neighbor, a police officer — about anything they see that doesn't seem quite right.
- ✔ Check out the school's policies on absent children — are parents called when a child is absent?
- ✔ Check out daycare and after-school programs — look at certifications, staff qualifications, rules on parent permission for field trips, reputation in the community, parent participation, and policies on parent visits.
- ✔ Check babysitter references.

AT HOME ALONE

- ✔ Leave a phone number where you can be reached. Post it by the phone, along with numbers for a neighbor and emergencies — police and fire departments, paramedics, and the poison control center.
- ✔ Have your child check in with you or a neighbor when he or she gets home. Agree on rules for having friends over and going to a friend's house when no adult is home.
- ✔ Make sure your child knows how to use the window and door locks.
- ✔ Tell your child not to let anyone into the home without your permission, and never to let a caller at the door or on the phone know there's no adult home. Kids can always say their parents are busy and take a message.
- ✔ Work out an escape plan in case of fire or other emergencies. Rehearse with your children.