

If you think your child may have been sexually abused:

- **Listen to your child.** Your child may feel scared, embarrassed or fear that the abuse was his or her fault. The abuser may have threatened to hurt you if the child tells. Reassure your child that he or she is safe with you and that telling the truth is the right thing to do.
- **Make sure your child knows that you are not mad at him or her.** You may be mad about what has happened, but your child needs to feel your support.
- **Report the abuse.** Sexual abuse almost always continues unless someone steps in to stop it. Even if it is someone in the family or at school or church, you need to report it. If you need help to do this, call the child abuse hotline in your area or 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453).



For help or more information,
call your local health department
or the **Info Connection** toll-free at
1-800-545-1098

Talking *with* Your Child *about* Touching *and* Sexual Abuse



Tricking or forcing a child to have sex or sexual contact is child sexual abuse. Most sexually abused children are abused by someone they know. This can be a family friend, baby sitter or relative. Adults who sexually abuse children often do so in a way that makes the child think it was his or her fault. A person who sexually abuses children needs outside help. Reporting that person is the first step to getting that help.

Talk to your child

Give your child the facts about keeping their bodies safe. Even small children need to know. Children who know the facts about sexual abuse will know that it is wrong for someone to touch them in a sexual way. This helps them stay safe when you are not around.

What you need to tell your child

Safety is a lesson that starts when your children are young. Little by little, children learn to cross the street, to stay away from poisons or what to do if there is a fire. Learning about different kinds of touching is an important safety lesson, too.

- **Safe touches** - These are touches that are safe and good, such as holding hands during a game or hugs and kisses by a parent or grandparent.
- **Unsafe touches** - These are touches that are unsafe and bad, such as hitting, kicking or other touching that hurts your body.
- **Confusing touches** - These are touches that might feel good or not hurt. Children sometimes are not sure if this type of touching is safe or not. An example of this is a babysitter or a coach wanting to shower and scrub with a child or student under their care.
- **Sexual touch** - This includes the child being asked, forced or tricked into touching the adult's sex organs in any way or the adult touching the child's private parts or body in a sexual way. Sexual touches can also be confusing touches.

Tell them about sexual abuse

Your child needs to know that they have the right to keep their bodies private. This means they have the right to not be tricked or forced into having any type of sexual contact with anyone.

This can be confusing for a child. Sometimes parents or others encourage children to hug or kiss another grownup. An example of this is a parent saying, "Don't hurt Aunt Sophie's feelings. Kiss her goodbye." Children need to know that they can say "no" when they don't want to be touched.

Make sure your child knows to tell anyone that touches them in a bad or confusing way to stop. Children should also know to tell a grownup they trust if anyone tries to trick or force them to have sexual contact.

Let your child know that it is always OK to tell you anything about sexual abuse or bad touches. Even if it makes you feel uncomfortable, children need to know that you will always listen to them. And, while children do make up stories at times, children rarely lie about sexual abuse.

When you talk to your child:

- Try to use real names for body parts, such as penis or breast, instead of slang words.
- Don't try to scare your children. Be sure they know about good touching as well as bad touching.
- Be open to questions from your children. If you don't know the answer, find out the answer and let them know.
- Help your child think of people they can trust and go to if they need help. This could include parents, friends, family friends, church leaders and teachers.

