



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A PARENTS' GUIDE FOR PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE

WHAT TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

In YMCA programs, we help build strong kids by teaching them safety rules. Parents can reinforce these rules by discussing and enforcing them at home too.

What children can do

- I **know** my name, address, telephone number, and parents' names.
- I always **check first** with my parents or the person in charge. I tell them before I go anywhere or get into a car, even with someone I know.
- I always **check first** with my parents or a trusted adult before I accept anything from anyone, even from someone I know.
- I always **take a friend** with me when I go places or play outside.
- I **say no** if someone tries to touch me or treat me in a way that makes me feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- It's **okay** to **say no**, and I **know** that there will always be someone who can help me.
- I **know** that I can **tell** my parents or a trusted adult if I feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
- I am **strong, smart**, and have the **right to be safe**.

What teens can do

- **Don't go out alone.** There is safety in numbers. This rule isn't just for little kids; it applies to teens too.
- **Always tell an adult where you're going.** Letting someone know where you'll be at all times is smart. If you are faced with a risky situation or get into trouble, your family and friends will know where to find you.
- **Say no if you feel threatened.** If someone—anyone—touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to say no. Whether it is pressure about sex, drugs, or doing something that you know is wrong, be strong and stand your ground.

The keys for teens

- Caution
- Communication
- Confidence

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD

The YMCA considers itself a partner with parents in the prevention of child abuse.

Tips for discussing child safety

Who?

- You. A parent is the best person to teach a child about personal safety.

What?

- Teach effective personal safety skills:
 - Smart thinking
 - Strong character
 - Sticking together

When?

- Now. Age and maturity matter:
 - There is no perfect age when parents should begin teaching children about personal safety.
 - A child's ability to comprehend and practice safety skills is affected by age, educational, and developmental levels.

How?

- **Listen** to your children.
 - Know your children's daily activities and habits.
 - Listen to what they like and what they don't like.
 - Encourage open communication. Let your children know they can talk to you about any situation.
 - Reassure your children that their safety is your number one concern.
- **Teach** your children.
 - Set boundaries about places they may go, people they may see, and things they may do.
 - Reinforce the importance of the buddy system.
 - Tell your children to trust their instincts—it's OK to say no.
- **Get involved.**
 - Know where your children are at all times.
 - Your children should check in with you if there is a change in plans.
 - There is no substitute for your attention and supervision.
- **Practice** safety skills with your children.
 - Rehearse safety skills so that they become second nature.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP CHILDREN

YMCAs partner with parents and others to create safe communities. Educate your neighbors, school and work friends, members of your church, and other groups you belong to. Keep a watchful eye on other children as well as your own.

Tips for parents to help their children stay safe

Safety at home:

- Children should know their full names, home phone numbers, and how to use the telephone. Post your contact information—office phone number, cell phone number, e-mail address, and so on—where your children will see it.
- Children should have a trusted adult to call if they are scared or have an emergency.
- Choose babysitters with care. Obtain references from family, friends, and neighbors. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing. Ask your children how the experience with the caregiver was and listen carefully to their responses.

Safety in the neighborhood:

- Make a list with your children of their neighborhood boundaries, choosing significant landmarks.
- Interact regularly with your neighbors. Tell your children whose homes they are allowed to visit.
- Don't drop your children off alone at malls, movie theaters, video arcades, or parks.
- Teach your children that adults should not approach children for help or directions. Tell your children that if an adult approaches them, they should stay alert because the adult may try to trick them.
- Never leave children unattended in a vehicle. Children should never hitchhike or approach a car when they don't know and trust the driver.
- Children should never go anywhere with anyone without getting your permission first.

Safety away from home:

- Be careful when you put your child's name on clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes, or bicycle license plates. If a child's name is visible, it may put them on a first-name basis with an abductor.
- Walk the route to and from your child's favorite places (school, neighborhood friends, YMCA, and so on), pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if someone is following them or they need help. Make a map with your children showing acceptable routes (to school, to the YMCA), using main roads and avoiding shortcuts or isolated areas. If your children take a bus, visit the bus stop with them and make sure they know which bus to take.

Source: "Personal Safety for Children," National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Copyright © 2011 YMCA of the USA. Reprinted from the *YMCA of the USA Child Abuse Prevention Training* © 2003, 2010 YMCA of the USA.