

How to Protect Your Children

As scary as it may be, parents need to talk to their kids about people who might want to hurt them. The best way to protect your children is to get them involved in their own protection. First let your kids know that you love them unconditionally and that they can tell you anything. Here are some other suggestions:

- 3 to 5 years old is not too young to teach your kids about pedophiles. When kids begin to interact with any community outside the home, they can be victims. That's when this issue should be addressed.

- Parents need to look around and learn to identify predators. Common signs are: someone who seems over friendly or has too much information about your kids. Many times they won't have children of their own.

- Remind your children that predators don't necessarily look scary or strange. A dangerous person could look like you or me.

- Don't be afraid that you will frighten your kids, but don't ask them to deal with things that they can't understand. Talk to them in age-appropriate language and give them specific instructions about what to do. They will feel confident by knowing how to protect themselves. *Don't share your own experiences if you were a victim of sexual molestation.* Telling too many details and going over personal tragedies can create a sexually charged environment and be harmful for your children in the long run.

- Your kids need to know that *it is okay to tell an adult no*. You have taught them about respecting adults, but if they feel scared or in danger, they have permission to make a scene, or to run away to a public place. They need to know they won't get into trouble if they were wrong. Let them know that no one has the right to hurt them.

- Teach your child to *call you immediately* if they are home alone and a stranger arrives.

- Make sure your kids know what behavior is acceptable, and what is wrong. Make sure they understand that there are private areas of their bodies that no one else should touch

A short conversation about this issue won't make a lasting impression. We need to invest the time in a productive dialog. Practice your child's response to danger. If he/she doesn't practice it, your child really won't really know what to do. Role playing is a good method to use. You can make fun while teaching a message that can save their life.