

'We all have the right to feel safe all the time'.

'Nothing is so awful that you can't talk with someone about it'.



# Protective Behaviours



## HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS?

This week we continue our theme on child safety with the next two tips for parents on how to talk to children about protective behaviours. Please talk to your child's teacher if you have questions about our Protective Behaviours curriculum.

### 3 Making a Safety Network

Recognise that your child may not tell you about an experience. This may be due to a number of reasons including your protection or fearing your reaction. While parents hope that their child will talk to them if something happens which makes them feel unsafe they may not always be available to help them immediately.



Help your child to develop a network of trusted adults whom they can talk to if they are feeling unsafe or worried by a problem.

1. Ask your child to choose at least five people they could tell, including some outside the home. Be led by your child in their choice of people and think about their capacity to be contacted.
2. One way a child can choose and remember who is on their network is to draw an outline of their hand and write the name of each network member inside each finger.
3. The trusted adults should know they are on the child's network. Your child can contact the adult and invite them. Be sure it is explained to the network member what this involves.
4. Discuss and review this network with your child from time to time. Remember people move and situations and relationships change.

### 4 Teach your child about their bodies.

When talking to children about their bodies, it is important for parents to consider their approach:

1. Use proper names, as they would be at the doctor's office. Cutesy terms, or 'comfortable names' can sometimes cause confusion in children, as well as embarrassment about their bodies. When children know the technical terms for their body parts it is less likely they will feel that there is anything dirty or shameful about them.
2. Also talk about other commonly used terms for body parts. In creating a safe and honest starting point, communication can become easier and gives children the respect they deserve regarding their bodies.
3. Use bath time as a good opportunity to talk to children about the names of their body parts, including private parts. It is important to explain that their bodies are their own and nobody should touch them in a way that makes them feel confused or uncomfortable.
4. Explain that private parts are the areas covered by bathers or underwear. Picturing this and explaining it will allow a clear picture for children. Areas not seen are private and 'off limits' to anyone else.
5. Let children know that it is not okay for others to touch their private parts, unless someone is helping them with toileting or at the doctors. The use of dolls with removable clothing might help parents and caregivers to talk about body parts and inappropriate touching.
6. Role-play and other games can help children to ask questions and think about things they may say in circumstances where they are uncomfortable.
7. An effective way to help children with this is to refer to 'the touching continuum'. Explain to children that there are three kinds of touches: **Okay**, **Not Okay** and **Confusing** touches.