

Tips for Teaching Safety Skills to Your Child

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- Rehearse with children their full name, parent's full name, address, and phone number, including area code.
- Make sure your children know your cell number and how to reach you in case of an emergency.
- Teach and practice how to call 911 (memorize the phone number, dial it, say what the emergency is, and leave the phone off the hook until police arrive).
- Walk the neighborhood with your children. Show them safe places they can go to in an emergency, like a friend's house or a store that is open.
- Explain to your children that a stranger is someone they don't know well. A stranger can be a man or woman, well-dressed or shabby, kind or threatening, pretty or ugly. If a stranger tries to follow them or grab them, they should scream and run to the nearest place where there are people.
- Teach children that if they get separated from you to go to a safe person (e.g., security guard in a uniform, store clerk, or mom with kids) and ask for help. Tell them to never go into the parking lot alone or with a stranger or even with someone they know unless you have told them it's okay.
- Tell your children never to open the front door to a stranger even when parents are home.
- Explain the difference between okay/not okay touch. Teach your child the NO, GO, TELL strategy: "Say NO to any situation that feels unsafe. GO away from anyone who is unsafe. TELL a parent or trusted adult. Never keep a secret about something that bothers you." It is helpful to read a storybook to your child to explain these concepts.
- Have children practice remembering colors, numbers, or features of people and things. This will help them give accurate descriptions if something does happen to them.
- Work out a safety plan in case of an emergency (e.g., fire, earthquake). This should include where they will go and what they will do (e.g., go to a special meeting spot which is the stop sign at the end of the street and wait for family members).
- Install an Internet filtering software to help protect your children online. Teach your children about Internet safety and responsible online behavior. There are books and articles online to guide you.
- Since children learn best with repeated practice, role-play "what if" scenarios on a regular basis.
- Initiate conversation that will encourage your child to talk with you openly and honestly about safety issues. Listen carefully to your child's fears and feelings about people or places that make him/her feel frightened or uncomfortable. Reassure your child that he/she will never get in trouble for telling you about an unsafe situation.