

What you can teach your children to help keep them safe from sexual abuse

1. **Teach children about the appropriate names for their body parts.** Although this may feel uncomfortable, this is one very basic prevention tool that we have at our disposal. Children who are aware of their bodies are less likely to be a target of an abuser because the abuser will see that someone has educated them about their body.
2. **Teach them the Safe Touch Rule.**
 1. Your private body parts are between your knees and your nose, where your bathing suit goes!
 2. Your body belongs to you, and only you!
 3. Kids do not share body parts.
 4. If someone tries to touch a kid's private body parts, kids should yell a loud, "NO!!"
 5. Kids should run away and try to get to a safe place.
 6. Kids should tell a grown-up that they know and trust.
 7. Kids should keep on telling until the touching stops forever.
3. **Secrets that make you feel unhappy, scared or confused should not be kept.**
4. **Teach them that they have the right to ask questions** about puzzling adult behaviour and have the right to have these questions taken seriously.

How children can be lured by abusers

Understanding how child sex offenders gain the confidence and trust of children can be a powerful way to stop the abuse from happening.

1. **The luring of children can begin by the abuser building trust with the child and their family.** The abuser's main objective is to avoid being caught and therefore wants to make sure that he/she has the trust of the whole family. This is one reason why children are often sexually assaulted by individuals they know. You will

often hear people say, “We never would have thought he was an abuser” or “She was the nicest neighbor, always helping out with things.”

2. **The next phase in the luring of children is when the abuser begins to bestow favours to the child and the family.** For example, offering to baby-sit the children or buy the child a toy, computer game, etc.
3. **Step three in the luring of children is when the abuser starts to alienate other people in the child’s life.** They may say things like, “I’m your best friend,” or “You don’t need to hang out with those other kids.”
4. **The fourth step is demanding secrecy from the child.** Abusers have many different ways of doing this. They sometimes threaten the child or tell them that they will hurt their family if they tell. Other times they convince the child that this is a special game just for them. Abusers use whatever they think will work with a child to get them to not tell about the abuse.
5. **Step five involves the abusers testing the child’s boundaries.** The abuser may ask a child to do what seems like a simple act to the child e.g. asking a boy to take off his shirt, with the promise he will receive a substantial reward if he complies to this request and keeps this request a secret.
6. **The final step is when the abuser continues to violate the child’s boundaries and abuses them.** Once the abuse knows a child comply with their requests scope of the abuse will escalate. Often the rewards the child receives from the abuser can be things the child knows they are not allowed to have e.g. alcohol for older children. Once the child receives such a reward, this can be further used to blackmail the child, reinforcing the secrecy of the abuse.

Adapted from Women Organized Against Rape (WOAR) website: <http://www.woar.org/counseling/indicators-of-abuse.html>