

KEEPING YOUNG CHILDREN SAFE

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is about keeping very young children safe. It includes ideas about babysitters, preventing children getting lost or abducted, and suggestions about how to get help if someone they know tries to sexually abuse them. Of course, we do not use these adult words when talking with children, but we can teach them never to keep touches secret.



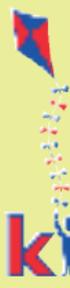
Here are some ideas to help you talk to your children without frightening them, but at the same time give them the message that no one should harm them and that they should tell you if they are worried. It is a fine balance, but it can be done in the same matter of fact way we teach children about crossing the road, the dangers of fire or being careful in the water.

TEACH THEM EARLY

If children are taught from the earliest possible time, even before the age of three, that their safety is important, it will help them grow up feeling more confident.



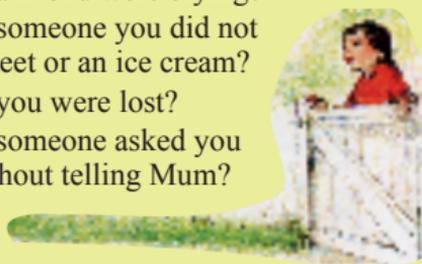
A common sense approach allows children to keep their trust in adults while they are learning how to care for themselves and get help from adults when necessary.



WHAT IFS?

Use 'What If' questions to help children think about keeping safe:

- What would you do if someone asked you to keep a secret?
- What would you do if you felt unsafe or worried?
- What would you do if a friend were crying?
- What would you do if someone you did not know offered you a sweet or an ice cream?
- What would you do if you were lost?
- What would you do if someone asked you to leave the garden without telling Mum?



DO NOT DEFINE PEOPLE AS GOOD OR BAD

When talking about strangers or people you don't know, beware of defining people as 'good' or 'bad'. If children think only bad people hurt them, they will not be prepared for the person who gains their trust. If you ask a group of 4 year olds about stranger, they will say strangers are:

- Bad
- Ugly
- Masked
- Smelly
- Weird
- Horrible



It is no wonder that a nicely dressed or 'good' person can lure a child away or that no one suspects that a kindly relative or friend could be an abuser. Explain that all people have good and bad in them and sometimes even good people do things we don't like. Remind them of the Hug List of people they are allowed to go with.

GETTING LOST

- When shopping, tell your child to stay put if they get separated from you
- Ensure your children know their names and address or you could put your phone number on the INSIDE of a wrist band
- Don't put your child's name on a T-shirt, hat or jewellery
- You may wish to use a wrist strap or harness for toddlers
- Tell your children they can ask for help from a person behind the counter or a police officer



TAKING CARE

One simple way to talk to young children is to explain that keeping safe means taking care of themselves. Start with asking them how people take care of their bodies. Ideas might include:

- Washing hair
- Bushing teeth
- Taking baths or showers
- Eating
- Drinking
- Going to the toilet



Explain that taking care of ourselves also includes things we like to happen to our bodies, such as a bubble bath, and things we don't like, such as getting soap in our eyes. Ask

children to think of touches they like, such as a feather or a ladybird or a hug or kiss, and touches they don't like - hair pulling, biting, a slap or hard tickling.



A great time to discuss things like this is when you are bathing children or telling stories or over lunch - anytime they are slightly quieter than normal!

BABYSITTING / CHILD MINDING

Check on anyone left in charge of your children. Talk (not just write) to other people they have worked with.

- Always use registered childminders.
- Be suspicious if someone is more interested in your child than in you and tries to get your child alone.
- Drop in unannounced - any good child minder or sitter will welcome you.
- Be aware of changes in children's behaviour that might indicate they are unhappy with the person looking after them, even if that person is a relative or friend. Most children are abused by someone they know.



HUGS AND KISSES

Children should never be forced to hug and kiss anyone, even parents or grandparents. They should never be made to feel guilty if they choose not to hug or kiss someone. This is one of the best ways to ensure that children learn that they have the right to their own bodies and can hug or kiss whomever they like.



HUG LIST

Ask children who they like to kiss or hug. This will give you and them a list of people they feel they could approach for help, if the need arose. You can do this verbally or, even better, by making drawings or pasting photograph on a paper or the front of the fridge.



This will be the 'safety list' of adults the child can go to for support. For young children the list may include friends, family members, and nursery staff or babysitters. If you want young children to learn whom they can go with, use the hug list. If someone not on the hug list asks them to go off, the child will know that he or she must try to get away and ask for help. No system is foolproof, but the Hug List has kept many children safe.



SAFE AND UNSAFE SECRETS



Explain to children the difference between safe secrets and unsafe secrets. An unsafe secret is when someone asks you to keep kisses, hugs or touches secret. *No one*, including people they know, should ever ask them to keep touching a secret and they should tell if anyone does.

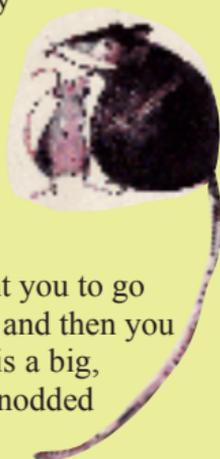
A safe secret may be a gift for mummy or daddy or a birthday present or a surprise party.



TEACHING CHILDREN TO TELL

Try using little stories like this to help children understand that they should not keep secrets - always tell mummy or daddy or another grown-up.

Baby Mouse lived with his mummy, daddy and sister in a warm, dark hole behind the kitchen. He was very happy and had lots of food, but he kept looking out of the hole at the lovely big kitchen and all the yummy food on the kitchen table. His mummy worried about him.



“You're very little,” she said. “I don't want you to go into the kitchen until you are much bigger and then you should only go with daddy or me. There is a big, ginger cat who lives there.” Baby Mouse nodded and promised.

One day his sister was babysitting while his mummy and daddy were out. Before they left they said, “Stay here and don't go out on your own.” Baby Mouse's whiskers twitched. He smelled the food and felt the warm sunshine coming in the kitchen window. He turned to his sister and said, “I'm just going to look, but it is a secret. Don't tell mum.” He scampered across the floor.

Mummy Mouse came home a few minutes later and asked where Baby Mouse was. “It's a secret,” said Sister Mouse. “I can't tell.” Mummy said, “You must tell me so I can find Baby Mouse.” Sister shook her head. “It's a secret.” Mummy Mouse looked out at the kitchen and saw a giant creature sneaking up behind Baby Mouse.



“MEEAAOW!” it said loudly. Baby Mouse screamed and ran as fast as he could. The cat chased after him and grabbed him by tail, licking its lips. Just then Mummy Mouse reached out and pulled Baby Mouse back into the hole away from the cat. He was very frightened and shivering.

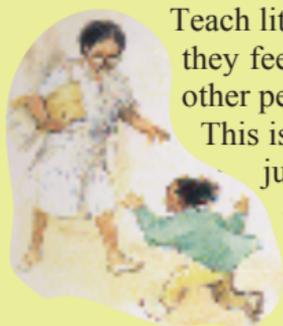
Mummy Mouse was cross. “That cat wanted you for lunch,” she said to Baby Mouse. “I'm sorry, Mummy, I should not have gone or asked sister to keep it a secret”. Sister Mouse hung her head. “I should have told you. I'll never keep a secret from you again.” Mummy gave them both a hug. “You're safe. Now let's have some tea.”

KIDSCAPE SAFETY CODE

YELL

RUN

TELL



Teach little ones that it is all right to **yell** if they feel frightened, to **run** TOWARDS other people and to **tell** what has happened. This is done in a low-key positive way, just as we teach them about other dangers. Again, ask them whom they would tell and we are back to the lovely hug list.

HELP ORGANISATIONS

Kidscape 020 7730 3300

Offers booklets and leaflets on keeping children safe. For a free copy send a large SAE to: Kidscape, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH or go on the website www.kidscape.org.uk

Helpline for parents of bullied children: **08451 205 204**

Sure Start 020 7273 4830

Aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by increasing the availability of childcare, improving health, education and emotional development for young children, and by supporting parents.

Address: Sure Start, Level 2, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA

Email: sure.start@dfee.gov.uk

Web: www.surestart.gov.uk

SureStart

Social Services Department

Look in the telephone directory for your nearest office

Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

Offers advice on all issues of parenting

National Society for the Protection of Children

0808 800 5000

Ring the NSPCC Helpline for advice if you feel a child is in danger

Text Michele Elliott & Linda Frost

Drawings Alice Englander

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Piloted by Laura Boyce and the parents of Sure Start Billesley and Ladywood.

