



Personal Safety for Children

HELPFUL RULES TO KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

- An unattended child is a child at risk. Arrange for an alternate person to pick up your child if you are delayed. Or determine with your child an alternative place for them to wait such as a well-lit store or inside an arena or school.
- Children should always, where possible, walk in pairs or groups.
- Children should always travel the same way home, and let their parents know the route they intend to take.
- Children should stay in well-traveled areas and should not take shortcuts.
- Don't allow your young child to go to a public washroom unattended.
- Check your babysitter's credentials thoroughly. In your absence, they are guardians of a priceless treasure.
- Tell your child it is not rude to ignore an adult who is asking directions on the street. An adult should **NOT** be asking a child for directions!
- Children should always keep their distance from stranger and their vehicles.

INFORMATION EVERY CHILD SHOULD KNOW

- Their own address and telephone number.
- Where to go in an emergency if there are no **BLOCK PARENT** homes around.
- Never get into a stranger's car.
- Never accept candy or gifts from strangers.
- NEVER go anywhere with a stranger or someone who makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Always play in safe places.
- Who can be contacted if their parents are not available.



GUIDELINE TO KEEPING A CHILD/CHILDREN SAFE

- Does your child know what to do if lost?
- Have you discussed peer pressure with your child?
- Have you discussed with your child what abnormal behaviour is?
- Have you ever taken a walking tour of your neighbourhood?
- Have you physically checked out the facilities that your child attends – day care/school, sports facilities and social areas?

GUIDELINE TO KEEPING A CHILD/CHILDREN SAFE (continued)

- Does your child know how to appropriately reject adult authority?
- Have you ever discussed emergency procedures with your child?
- Does your child carry personal identification and medical information?
- Do you know if your child is a follower or a wanderer?
- Can you account for your child's whereabouts?
- Have you discussed with your child who might be the best person to approach if he or she needs help?
- Have you ever done any public transportation training with your child?
- Do you know specifically how much money your child has to spend?
- In the presence of your child, do you display a positive attitude toward police and the law?
- Is your home a gathering place for young people? Have you thought why? Do you know whose house *is* a gathering place for young people?
- Do you know the telephone numbers and addresses of your child's friends?
- Have you met the parents of your child's friends?
- Do you feel you listen to your child? Do you spend enough time with your child?
- Does your child know how and where to reach you at any time?

EDUCATE YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

Most parents want to educate their children about sexual abuse but they don't know how. These guidelines will help parents to teach their children how to keep safe. Remember, you can't tell a child too much. Knowledge doesn't stimulate inappropriate behaviour, ignorance does. Parents who talk openly with their children are "askable" parents, and children will feel free to bring their worries and concerns to them in the future.

- Tackle the subject of sexual abuse prevention with the same honest, matter-of-fact manner you would attach to road safety. Remember that the only time a child will ask you about sexual abuse is after it has happened. Open the subject and your child will remember that you are askable.
- Often, people who sexually abuse children ask them to keep the behaviour their "little secret", or they tell the child that harm will come to family members if they tell. This underscores the significance of any sudden behavioural changes in your child, as well as the importance of having very honest, open communication with them about this subject.
- Introduce your child to the "Hot and Cold" game. Describe a situation that is "cool" ... imagine you are walking home from a friend's house ... to make it "tepid" ... you hear footsteps and think someone is following you ... Request the child to make the situation "cool" again and suggest that it would be appropriate to cross the street. Now make the situation warmer by indicating that the footsteps have also crossed the street. Suggest that the child cross back again, and explain that if the footsteps cross the street for a second time, then the situation is "hot". Ask for ways to "cool" down the situation. You might help with ideas such as going into a lighted store, going into a trusted neighbour's house, looking quickly for a Block Parent, or because it is a "hot" situation, they might yell.
- If you ever suspect that an abuse has taken place:
 - DO encourage the child to talk about it.
 - DO establish in the child's mind that he/she is not to blame.
 - DO NOT correct the child's story; listen to the original words, including those that are babyish or family words.
 - DO NOT suggest or modify what the child is trying to say. Your ideas might confuse the truth.
 - DO NOT show horror or anger. However, if caught by surprise and unable to control your emotions, be clear that your anger is meant for the offender, not the child.
- When you are aware of an incident of sexual abuse, call the police or the child welfare authorities immediately. Ensure that a social worker, a police officer and someone supportive to the child is present when the evidence is given.

If you wish more information on Personal Safety for Children contact the Winnipeg Police Service Community Relations Unit at 986-6322.