

## Ways to Reduce Risk of Sexual Abuse

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- Have sexual abuse safety discussions with your child often.
- Make yourself visible.
- To people caring for your child. Drop in occasionally. Ask lots of questions when you leave your child in the care of another person. Be sure to ask questions when you pick your child up, especially in front of whomever cared for them. Ask what they did, whether they played any new games, and if anything happened that bothered them. Let them know your child has had sexual abuse safety talks. Any abuser who knows that you get details about your child's day may think twice before committing sexual abuse.
- To your children and their friends. Children can be abused by other children/teens (even in your own home). When supervising your child, be sure they are where you can easily see and hear them. Keep bedroom doors open during play time, and allow no more than one child in the bathroom at a time.
- Ask lots of questions before allowing your child/teen to go on an outing or organized activity with friends or family. Make sure you know who will be there, where they will go, and what they plan to do. Make sure your child/teen knows how to contact you if they need you. Upon returning, ask your child/teen if something happened that bothered them.
- Make sure children are attended while going to the bathroom in public places. Although this type of abuse is rare, it can sometimes happen.
- If you notice any 'easy target' symptoms (see pages 10-11) present in your child, take steps to start working on those. For example, if you have a child who is particularly shy, start arranging different play dates and opportunities for your child to overcome their shyness. If you notice your child has low self-esteem, get some books at the library on this topic and consider contacting a therapist for your child.
- For single parents: Be cautious in dating relationships. Think carefully before introducing your partner to your child. Some abusers target single parents so they can spend time alone with their child. For example, they may offer to baby-sit or take your child on an outing alone. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

## Preparing to Talk to Your Child to Prevent Abuse

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- **Remember:** Genitals are not dirty parts, they are part of the human body and should be taught no differently than a child's nose or elbows. Teach your child the real names for body parts including penis, vagina, and breasts. Children can read your non-verbal cues as well so ...
  - **Practice:** As you brush your teeth, comb your hair, etc., practice saying penis and vagina in the mirror. The more you say those words and talk in sexually correct terms, the more comfortable you will become with it.
  - **Start young:** From a very young age, try to raise children with no shame of their bodies. When playing games with toddlers in which they point to their elbow or point to their nose, also include their penis or vagina. Teach them from a young age that it is okay to use those words and that their genitals are as much a part of their body as their ears or hair color.

# Talking to Your Child/Teen

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Talk openly (but not graphically) with your child/teen about sexual abuse. Unless the subject is clearly explained, children do not understand.

## Teach them these specific rules about their body:

- People should never ask you to do anything with them while you are naked.
- People should never ask to touch your penis or vagina unless it is at the doctor's office or they have parents' permission.
- People should never ask you to touch their penis or vagina.
- People should never ask you to keep secrets from your parents.
- You should only use your penis or vagina to go potty.
- Teach your child that their body belongs to them and they have a right to say who touches them and how. Don't force children to kiss or hug a grown-up or sit on a grown-up's lap (even Grandma) if they don't want to. This gives them control and teaches them that they have the right to say no.
- Teach your child that adults are not always right and that it is OK to say no if ANY adult asks them to do something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Teach your child to tell you if they don't feel right about something an adult does.
- Let your child know that they can tell you anything and that you will be supportive, that you will believe them, and that you will not be mad at them.
- Teach your child to listen to their feelings and to tell a grown-up if they feel uncomfortable.
- Teach your child to refuse anything from strangers, including money, gifts, or rides. If your child suddenly has a new item, find out where it came from.
- Keep children's books about abuse prevention and healthy boundaries in your child's room (see reference list at the end of this book) and read them to your child periodically.
- **PRACTICE** abuse prevention rules with your family. Make it part of your regular conversations. Incorporate sexual safety discussions as you would any other safety talks with your child.

**Remember that the earlier children learn the facts about sexual abuse, the better their chances of being protected from a traumatic experience.**

## Don't Forget the Internet

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While the Internet offers many exciting opportunities for children/teens, it can also expose your family to many dangerous situations. As parents, you should know a few things about the Internet.

- Internet abusers can get access to information about your family and your children that you may never even know existed on the Internet.
- You should **EXPECT** that your children will be approached by someone online who is not who they claim to be. They will be asking questions to find out who your child really is and how to find them.
- Because we can not see or “get a sense” of a person while chatting online, Internet abusers can gain your child’s trust.
- The most important tip for online safety is the very same tip for preventing other types of abuse: **talk to your children!** Help them prepare for a potential threat by establishing a safety plan when using the Internet and continue to monitor their Internet use.

Learn more and find useful tools about Internet safety at [netsmartz.org](http://netsmartz.org)

## Internet Safety Tips

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1. Monitor your child's online activity.
2. Set rules about Internet use (amount of time, time of day, allowed websites).
3. Give your child specific information about why they should **never** provide personal information on the Internet (including age, school, hobbies, photos).
4. Tell your child not to use screen names that identify them as a young boy or girl (e.g., Amy13, nintendokid). This is often the first thing that Internet abusers look for.
5. Instruct your child to treat an unwanted message or photo like an unwanted phone call: close the site immediately and never return.
6. Tell your child to come to you when someone approaches them on-line.
7. Understand that your child may have access to the Internet through many devices including a computer, cell phone, and gaming device, as well as at friends' homes or the library.
8. Know whom your child talks to online.
9. Learn about the Internet including "chat lingo," common social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat) and chat rooms (learn more at [netsmartz411.org](http://netsmartz411.org)).
10. Consider safety options such as blocking, filtering, and rating applications (learn more at [netsmartz411.org](http://netsmartz411.org)).
11. Know how to set parental controls and check history files (learn more at [netsmartz411.org](http://netsmartz411.org)).
12. Report concerns to the CyberTipline by calling 1 (800) 843-5678 or at [cybertipline.com](http://cybertipline.com).

# Normal Sexualized Behaviors for Specific Age Groups

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## Ages 3-7 years

- Conversations about private parts with friends
- “Show me yours and I’ll show you mine” with friends
- Playing doctor
- Occasional masturbation without penetration
- Imitating seduction (kissing, flirting) or having crushes

## Ages 7-12 years

- Privacy becomes more important and they may be more modest with their bodies
- More aware of gender differences between boys and girls
- More aware of sexual themes (on TV, in songs, and jokes)
- More mature children may begin to feel sexual pressure from friends

## Teenage years

- Sexually explicit conversations and/or jokes with friends
- Flirting, courtship, hugging, kissing, and holding hands
- Sexual exploration

# Resources

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## For Parents

- **When Your Child Has Been Molested** (2004)  
*by Kathryn B. Hagans and Joyce Case*  
This book covers a variety of topics including common reactions by parents, possible signs of sexual abuse, information on the investigative process, and the healing process of family and friends.
- **Helping Your Child Recover from Sexual Abuse** (1992)  
*by Caren Adams, Jennifer Fay, and A. G. Fawkes*  
This book has examples to help parents know what to say in a variety of situations such as when everyone knows, when confusing feelings arise, grieving the loss, and appropriate boundaries for your family.
- **Protect Your Child from Sexual Abuse: A Parent's Guide** (1984)  
*by Janie Hart-Rossi*  
This book contains facts about abuse, key phrases children can use to resist uncomfortable touch, and specific activities to be done with children to reduce the likelihood of abuse.
- **Let's Talk About Sex** (2005) *by S. Gitchel and L. Foster*  
This book coaches parents on how to talk to their 9-12 year old children about sex and how to communicate their sexual values to their children.
- **Children Who Molest** (1987) *by Eliana Gil*  
This book gives parents the basics on children who molest, answers common questions parents have, and directs parents to resources about children who molest.

## For Children

- **My Body Is Mine, My Feelings Are Mine** (1995) *by S. Hoke*  
This is a body safety storybook for children ages 5-9 that includes a safety quiz for kids and important information for parents.
- **My Body is Private** (1992) *by Linda Walvoord Girard*  
This book teaches kids that their body is their own personal space and no one should touch them without permission.
- **A Very Touching Book** (1985) *by Jan Hindman*  
This book is for all ages and uses humor to teach children about their bodies, privacy, and what to do about inappropriate touching.
- **Do You Have a Secret?** (2005) *by Jennifer Moor Mallinos*  
This book helps children ages 4-7 learn which secrets they should keep to themselves and which secrets should be shared with a grown-up.

- ***Charlie's Heavy Backpack*** (2005) by Jodi Hassler and MaryAnn Kildebeck  
This audio book for ages 4–12 teaches how difficult life can be when asked to keep a secret and that it is not any child's responsibility to protect an adult by keeping a secret.
- ***I Told My Secret*** (1986) by Eliana Gil  
This book answers questions kids (ages 3–8 years) have after they are abused and includes issues like self-blame, secrets, telling, rejection, trust, being removed from their home, going to court, and seeking help.
- ***It Happens to Boys Too*** (1987)  
*by Jane A. W. Satullo, M.A. Robert Russel, and Pat A. Bradway*  
A book that can be read by boys and their parents that talks about how sharing information with a caring adult is the best way to help victims.
- ***What's the Big Secret – Talking about Sex with Boys and Girls*** (1997)  
*by L.K. Brown & Marc Brown*  
This book is for ages 3–8 and promotes dialogue between kids and parents about sex.
- ***What's Happening to Me? – Illustrated Guide to Puberty*** (1975) by P. Mayle  
This book discusses mental and physical changes that take place during puberty.
- ***Someone in My Family Has Molested Children*** (1994)  
*by Eliana Gil and Jeffrey Bodmer-Turner*  
This is a book for kids whose mom, dad, or relative has molested children.

#### For Teens

- ***The Me Nobody Knows – Guide for Teen Survivors*** (1997)  
*by B. Bean and S. Bennett*  
This book communicates openly and honestly with teens who have been sexually abused.
- ***Invisible Girls: Truth About Sexual Abuse*** (2005)  
*by Patti Feuereisen and Caroline Pincus*  
This book weaves together powerful first person narratives with gentle guidance and seasoned insights to give girls the courage to heal.
- ***If I Tell*** (2007) by S. Marcy-Webster  
This book is narrated by a teen who was sexually abused by a family member & her conflicted feelings related to telling about the abuse.
- ***How Long Does It Hurt: A Guide to Recovering from Incest and Sexual Abuse for Teenagers, Their Friends, and Their Families*** (2004)  
*by Cynthia Mather and Kristin E. Debye*  
This book speaks directly to teen victims on sensitive issues including internet sex crimes and helps them overcome their feelings of isolation, confusion and self doubt.

### For Adult Survivors (Men and Women)...

- ***Breaking the Cycle of Abuse: How to Move Beyond Your Past to Create an Abuse-free Future*** (2005) by Beverly Engel  
This book offers support, hope, and compassion as well as strategies to help readers stop passing on the legacy of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse to their children and partners.
- ***Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*** (1992) by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis  
This is a self-help book that covers the healing process, how to change patterns, and help for partners and supporters.
- ***The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse*** (2001) by Wendy Maltz and Carol Arian  
This is a step-by-step guide to recovery from sexual abuse. It offers first person accounts of women and men at every stage of the sexual healing journey and includes exercises and techniques for survivors.
- ***No Secrets, No Lies: How Black Families Can Heal from Sexual Abuse*** (2004) by Robin Stone  
Through compelling personal accounts, this book shows the consequences of remaining silent and provides holistic, practical steps toward healing.
- ***Miss America by Day*** (2004) by Marilyn Van Derbur  
The author, who is a former Miss America, tells the story of how she was sexually violated by her prominent, millionaire father from age 5 to age 18. She discusses the “work” she did in therapy on her journey to heal from victim to survivor.

### Especially For Men....

- ***Wounded Boys, Heroic Men: A Man's Guide to Recovering from Child Abuse*** (1998) by Daniel J. Sonkin  
This book is a groundbreaking tool for men who have been physically, sexually, or psychologically abused.

### For Partners of Incest Survivors...

- ***Ghosts in the Bedroom: A Guide for the Partners of Incest Survivors*** (1991) by Ken Graber  
This book is about how partners can accept responsibility for their own issues, support the recovery of the incest or sexual abuse survivor, and work toward solving relationship problems together.
- ***Allies in Healing: When the Person You Love Was Sexually Abused as a Child*** (1991) by Laura Davis  
This book helps the partners supporting individuals who have been abused.

## Internet Resources

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- For information about protecting your child on the Internet, go to [netsmartz.org](http://netsmartz.org).
- For information about children's mental health, go to: [nami.org](http://nami.org).

**For information about sexual abuse prevention, go to any of the following:**

- **Global Children's Fund** – offers sexual abuse prevention handbooks for parents and workbooks for children that can be downloaded at no cost. [keepyourchildsafe.org](http://keepyourchildsafe.org)
- **Child Molestation Research and Prevention Institute** – Web site provides primary prevention plan, lists sex-specific therapy sites, and gives six questions to ask sex-specific therapists. [childmolestationprevention.org](http://childmolestationprevention.org)
- **Prevent Child Abuse America** – Takes a grass-roots approach at the national and community levels to prevent child abuse in all forms. Focus on child abuse prevention and awareness as well as positive parenting strategies. [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)
- **Prevent Child Abuse Iowa** – Reports child abuse rates in Iowa with a focus on education and legislative efforts to prevent child abuse. Offers opportunities for supporting child abuse prevention efforts in your community. [www.pcaiowa.org/](http://www.pcaiowa.org/)
- **STOP IT NOW!** – A national public health-based organization working to prevent and eradicate child sexual abuse and operates a helpline for adults who are at risk to abuse children, for friends and family members of sexual abuse victims, and for parents of children with sexual behavior problems. **(888) 773-836/(888)PREVENT** or [stopitnow.org](http://stopitnow.org)

For topics not listed or for more information on resources available, please contact our **Family Advocate (515) 241-4311**.