

Good for you!

Working Together to Keep Our Youth Healthy

Family Resource

Good and Bad Touch

Your child has learned to tell the difference between good and bad touch. Here are some examples of good and bad touch for children:

Good Touch

Hugs
Gentle tickling
Licks from a dog
A cat rubbing against someone's leg
Kisses from mom and dad at bedtime and for hellos and good-byes
Pats on the back or head when someone does a good job
Shaking hands
A friend's arm across someone's shoulder

Bad Touch

Hugs that are too tight
Tickling that won't stop
Hitting
Kisses from someone a person doesn't like or doesn't feel comfortable with
Squeezing a hand too hard
Someone touching the private parts of a child or making the child touch their private parts

Child Sexual Abuse: What Every Parent Should Know

Child sexual abuse is any act of a sexual nature done to or with a child. Most sexually harmful acts are committed by someone the child knows. This could be a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a babysitter. Very few children are molested by a stranger.

The number of reported cases of child sexual abuse is increasing each year. The National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect estimates that 500,000 cases of child sexual abuse may be taking place each year.

One reason that sexual abuse continues to increase is because children are not taught to protect themselves. Young children are often unable to tell the difference between sexual assault and other forms of touching. Even when children know about sexual assault they may hesitate to get help. This is because they often feel responsible for the abuse. The child may also fear the results of reporting it.

Child sexual abuse may result in both physical and emotional problems for children. The signs of abuse vary with age. However, most abused children complain of various physical problems, and show mistrust of all significant adults. The child often feels guilty and responsible for the abuse. A wide range of behaviors can be seen in abused children. These behaviors may include depression, suicidal actions, withdrawal, or self destructive or delinquent acts. Any sudden,

unexplained change in behavior may be a sign of sexual abuse.

The following information may be helpful if your child or any child seems to have concerns.

- Children seldom lie about sexual abuse. They find it very hard to tell someone. If they tell you, you need to listen carefully and believe them.
- If a child wants to talk with you, find a private place to talk. Don't hold the discussion in front of others.
- Don't over-react or minimize the incident. The effects are different for each child. It may also take time to figure out the problem.

Good for you!

Protecting Your Children

There are two ways to prevent children from being sexually abused. First, we can prepare them for what they might face. Second, we can protect them from dangerous situations. As parents you can:

Prepare Children for What They Might Face

- Support your child's right to say "No."
- Make it easy for children to talk to you by taking what they say seriously.
- Add information about sexual assault when teaching about safety.
- Give specific definitions and examples of sexual assault.
- Remind children that even "nice" people sometimes do mean things.
- Urge children to tell you about anybody who causes them to feel uncomfortable.
- Prepare children to deal with bribes, threats, and physical force.
- Do away with secrets between you and your children.
- Teach children how to say "No," and ask for help. Teach them to ask for limits on who touches them and how.
- Set up a "password". A password is any word you and your children decide to use as a secret clue. If it is safe for your child to go with someone, tell that person the password. Ask your child to ask for the password before he/she agrees to ride with someone. Instruct your child not to go with any stranger or friend who doesn't know the password. The password could be the name of a favorite toy, or cartoon character, or a silly, made-up word.
- Be a model for your children. Show them self-protective and limit-setting behavior.

Children's Protective Services Can Help!

The phone number for the Hendrick's County Office of Family and Children is:
1-800-800-5556

The phone number for the Hendrick's County Sheriff Department is: 745-6464

Protect Children from Dangerous Situations

- Be aware of who is around your children. Unwanted touch may come from someone you like and trust.
- Take a second look for signals of likely danger.
- Refuse to leave your children in the company of those you do not trust.

Adapted from NO MORE SECRETS: Protecting Your Child from Sexual Assault, by Caren Adams and Jennifer Fay, copyright 1981. Impact Publisher, Inc., San Luis Obispo, CA 93406.

If you ever have to help a child recover from a sexual assault, as a parent you can:

- Listen carefully and understand.
- Reassure the child that telling you was the right thing to do. Believe him/her.
- Don't blame him/her for what happened.
- Know local resources and choose help carefully.
- Let your child talk about the assault whenever he/she needs to express his/her feelings.
- Be willing to go through a recovery process as a family.

Sexual assault affects all of us, even if our own children are not assaulted. To help deal with this social problem, all of us can:

- Provide understanding, care, and support to those who have been hurt.
- Know that offenders do not change without outside help.
- Organize neighborhood programs to help each other protect children.
- Ask schools to provide information about sexual assault. This is a problem of health and safety.
- Form community groups to support education, treatment, and law enforcement programs.