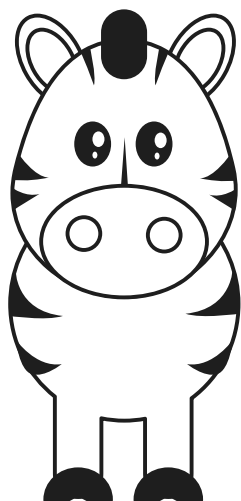


# Caregiver's Guide to Teaching Body Safety

It is important to normalize talking about bodies, sexuality, consent, boundaries and safety from a young age



Why?

- You will be laying a foundation where your child will feel comfortable coming to you with questions around sex and their bodies as they get older
- Informing children about their bodies will empower them to make healthy choices and will decrease their likelihood of becoming victimized
- Children who are comfortable talking to their caregivers about their bodies are more likely to disclose if abuse does happen

## Tip #1. Use appropriate language when discussing body parts

- Penis, Vagina, Buttocks and so on are not bad words
- Having 'special' or 'silly' names for them could contribute to feelings of shame around these parts of their body or confusion if they are trying to communicate about their body using different terms
- Teach which parts of their body are 'private' (i.e parts covered by a swimming suit)

## Tip #2. Teach your child what 'okay' and 'not okay' touch is

- 'Okay touch is meant to show care and affection for people and could be hugging or holding hands
- 'Not okay' touch is physical touch that we do not like and want to stop like hitting or touching private parts
- Sometimes a touch that is normally okay like a hug, might not feel okay if it is with someone they don't want a hug from or they just don't want to be hugged. That is okay! Remind them that they get a say in who and when someone touches them

## Tip #3. Encourage your child to have ownership and pride over their own bodies. No one is allowed to touch or look at their bodies without permission

- This means not forcing your child to show affection to people that they don't want to, even if it is a family member.
- Encourage the people in your life to ask permission to hug your child, and respect how your child responds. Remind your child to ask permission of other people when they want to show affection.

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**Tip #4. Help your child understand how their bodies feel when they are safe, and when they feel unsafe.**

- This might be looking for clues like they feel calm, happy and want to play when they feel safe. And they might have a weird feeling in their tummy or feel scared or frozen when they feel unsafe.
- Let them know that even though a touch may feel good, if their bodies give them an unsafe feeling like you've talked about with them then this touch isn't okay, and they should tell you about it.

**Tip #5. Respect when your child says 'No' or 'Stop' and teach them that when people use these words we must immediately stop what we are doing**

- Encourage your child to pay attention to other's personal boundaries through facial expressions and cues.
- For example, if we sit too close to someone and they don't like it, they might just move over a bit instead of saying something out loud.



**Encourage family members to model these behaviours**

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**Tip #6. Teach your child that there should be no secrets about touch and that they can come talk to you about anything.**

- Even if a friend tells them a secret, it will still be a secret if they tell their parents. Especially if the secret makes them worried or anxious, remind them that they will not be in trouble.
- Help your child to identify safe adults in their life that they can talk to.

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There is a lot of curiosity, play and exploration that happens as children grow and learn about their bodies, so keep an eye on which behaviours are developmentally appropriate, and which behaviours might be cause for concern.

A helpful guide for this, and more resources can be found through the Canadian Centre for Child Protection:

<https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/order/product/322:en/>

For more information on sexual development, teaching sexual health and relationships:

<https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/>

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**References:**

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Sexual-Behaviors-Young-Children.aspx>

<https://www.talkwithyourkids.org/lets-talk-about/healthy-sex-talk-teaching-kids-consent-ages-1-21.html>

<https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents/information-by-topic/understanding-consent/>