

**The single most important thing to remember when teaching your children about stranger danger is to instill confidence, rather than fear.**

No doubt, it is a very important issue that all parents must address – and one that requires ongoing, open communication with their children.

You want to equip your child with the knowledge and strategies they will need to protect themselves in dangerous situations. Also, keep your child's age and maturity level in mind and base lessons upon that.

Again, stranger danger lessons should be ongoing. Adapt the conversation as your child grows as he/she is likely to encounter different types of situations.

***Who are "strangers"?***

First and foremost, children need to understand what you mean by stranger.

Not all people unknown to them are necessarily dangerous – they need to understand the difference between “good” and “bad” strangers; an overly simplistic dichotomy, but one that puts the issue in terms a child can understand.

This is important so children understand where and to whom to turn if they are ever lost or feel scared, threatened, or if they think someone may be following them.

Examples of “good” strangers may include police officers, security guards, teachers, store clerks, etc. These are all examples of people to turn to if when your child needs help.

On the other hand, in many situations where your child may be approached by a “bad” stranger – the park, residential street, etc – those easily identifiable people may not be around.

Your child should know that there really are many more “good” people, than “bad.”

If they are approached by a “bad” stranger who tries to lure or physically pull them away, the best thing they can do is get the attention of other adults - whether that is by running to the nearest home, or making enough noise to be heard by someone, the vast majority of adults will help a child in danger.

***"Stranger Danger", tips and strategies.***

Additionally, the following are important tips and strategies for children to protect themselves:

- Know your name, address, and phone number.
- Use the buddy system – avoid walking anywhere alone.
- Trust your instincts – if you feel you are being followed or something is not right, seek help immediately.
- If a stranger approaches you, you do not have to speak to him or her. Never approach a stranger in a motor vehicle. Just keep walking. Do not accept candy or any other items from a stranger. Never walk off with a stranger no matter what he or she tells you.
- If someone is following you try to remember the license plate of his or her vehicle and immediately tell a trusted adult.
- If a stranger grabs you, do everything you can to stop him or her from pulling you away or dragging you into his or her car. Drop to the ground, kick, hit, bite, and scream. Do whatever it takes to attract the attention of others who can help you. If someone is dragging you away, scream, "this is not my dad", or "this is not my mom" .

While sharing the above tips with your child is extremely important, the best way to teach stranger danger lessons is through role-playing scenarios.

#### Stranger Danger Role Playing Scenarios

Use Stranger Danger role playing scenarios with your children to teach them what to do when approached by a stranger. They will benefit the most if you participate in the role playing.

Explain to your children that a stranger is not only someone you hardly know or do not know at all. People that they see frequently in your neighborhood or community, but do not know really well, may be just as much a stranger as someone they have never met before or have never seen. In fact, statistics show that most child abductions are committed by individuals known in some way to the child.

The purpose of role playing is to teach your child how to react when approached by a stranger. You should teach your child to seek help from a trusted adult, like a teacher, police officer or a well-known friend's parent anytime they feel scared or threatened by a stranger.

Role play the following encounters and fit the circumstances of your own neighborhood and surroundings:

#### Children waiting for the bus or a ride home

While waiting for the bus at school, your child is approached by a stranger and says, "Your mother is sick and she asked me to come pick you up and take you home."

- Teach your child never to get in a vehicle with someone they don't know or don't know well.

- Your child should immediately return to the school and ask the principal or a teacher to use the phone to call you and confirm that you have sent the person to pick them up. Explain that you will never send a stranger to pick them up.
- Identify a code word, known only to you and your child. In the event of an emergency in which you would need a friend to pick up your child, teach your child only to go with the friend if he or she knows the code word.

Your child is home alone and the doorbell rings

- Teach your child to never answer the door when she is home alone. She should ignore the doorbell and avoid looking out windows where she is visible to individuals outside of the house.
- If the person knocking yells through the closed door that it is an emergency, teach your child to call you or 911, but not to open the door.

Your child is home alone and the phone rings

- Leave a list of numbers your child should be familiar with, including your cell phone number, work number, grandparent's numbers, etc. Teach your child not to answer the phone if he does not recognize the number and let the call go to voicemail.
- If your child does answer the phone and the caller asks to speak with his parents, teach him to never let the caller know he is home alone. Your child should say that you are busy and offer to take a message.

Your child is playing an online game and a player asks for her real name

- Teach your child to never provide identifying information over the internet, including name, age, or location, even if the person asking is a "friend," they have made online. [Child Internet Safety Tips](#)

Your child is outside riding his bike when a car begins to slowly follow along

- Teach your child to seek help immediately if he feels like he is being followed. If there is a public place nearby, such as a convenience store or restaurant, he/she should go in and ask for assistance from an adult who works there. If he is in a residential neighborhood, teach him to go directly home, if close by, or to a friend's house. If he is in an unfamiliar neighborhood teach him to look for a house where it appears someone is home (vehicle in driveway, people in yard, etc), ring the bell and ask for help.
- Teach your child the difference between a "stranger" who seeks out your child and a "stranger" your child may need to seek out to ask for help.

- If your child carries a cell phone, teach him to call you as soon as he has sought help from an adult in a safe place. If he has nowhere to turn, teach him to call 911.

Your child is outside playing when a stranger driving by stops his car and asks if she has seen his lost dog (or for directions to the nearby elementary school, or for the time, etc)

- Teach your child to never go near a stranger's car. Adults do not ask children for help. Your child should immediately walk away and seek help from a trusted adult (as described in scenario above).

Your child is standing outside the local movie theater waiting for you to pick him up. A stranger offers him a ride. He declines, but the stranger attempts to pull him towards the stranger's car.

- Teach your child to scream "this is not my dad/mom." If your child only fights or screams wordlessly, he may be mistaken by passersby for simply throwing a tantrum. However, if he makes it clear to those around him that the stranger is not his parent, they will be more likely to intervene and help him.
- Teach your child to do anything they can to avoid being placed in the stranger's car, including screaming, kicking, hitting or biting.

Your child is at the local playground when an unfamiliar adult calls out to her by name. The adult asks her to come over to talk with him.

- Your child should never be at the park or playground alone. If old enough to be without adult supervision, she should use the buddy system.
- If your child does not know the adult, she should shake her head no and quickly walk away to a safe place.
- Teach your child that just because an adult knows her name, it does not mean it is safe to approach the adult. The stranger may have overheard her name being called by others or read it on her clothing, backpack, etc.
- In situations like this, safety trumps manners. It is better for your child to risk being "rude" in order to ensure her safety. If it turns out the adult was a friend or acquaintance, they will understand.

Kids need to know that unfortunately Stranger Dangers sometimes purport to be the police and may have with them identification that could fool an adult. If a police officer needs to speak with your child, in the majority of these cases the police officer will be in a fully marked squad car with the name of your local community displayed and the officer will be in uniform. The police are aware of these types of encounters and will understand the child may not want to speak with the officer for obvious reasons, especially if the officer is in a unmarked squad and is in civilian dress.

## **SafetyTips for Children Grades K-5**

### ***Sexual Assault***

Most grown-ups are nice to kids and care about what happens to them. But every now and then there are grown-ups who try to touch a child in a way that is not okay. It might be a person you know and trust, like a relative, teacher or neighbor.

There are a few things you should know that can help if this ever happens to you:

- Your body belongs to you.
- No one has the right to touch you, if you don't want them to. That includes teachers, grandparents, uncles and aunts, mom, dad -- everyone!
- There are places on your body that are private -- like places your swimming suit covers -- that an adult should not try to touch, unless it's the doctor and your parent or guardian is in the room with you.
- Trust your feelings. If something feels funny or wrong to you, **YOU CAN SAY NO**. It is good to say no to an adult who tries to do something that is wrong.
- Tell someone you trust what happened, even if the person said it was a secret or that they would hurt you or someone else if you told.
- If someone does something to you that is wrong, they may tell you it is a special secret or make you promise not to tell. **TELL!** It is absolutely okay to break this kind of promise -- the person who made you promise knows that they are doing something very wrong.
- Keep telling until someone listens. Some adults do not know what to do when a young person tells them about sexual abuse. An adult may tell you not to talk about it or to forget it. They may even accuse you of making up stories. Don't give up. Find someone to tell who will help. The adult who gave you this paper cares about you. She or he might be a good person for you to talk to.

### ***Remember, adults and older kids should:***

- Never ask you to keep a secret about touching.
- Never touch you anywhere that is private, like where your bathing suit covers you.

- Never ask you to touch them anywhere private.
- Never reach under your clothes or try to get you to take off your clothes.
- Never ask you to take off their clothes.
- Never ask you to keep a secret about something wrong.
- Never try to take pictures of you without your clothes.
- Never ask you to touch yourself or other kids anywhere private.

### ***Preventing Abduction***

- Don't play in deserted areas -- such as empty playgrounds, parks, construction sites or dumps.
- Stay with your mom or dad in public places or use the buddy system. Play, walk, bike and skate with a friend.
- If you are out somewhere with an adult and you lose them, don't go looking for them. If you are in a store, go to the cashier or security guard and ask for help. If you can't find a cashier or security guard and you are in trouble, look for a woman with small children for help.
- Stay alert and trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, like you think someone is following you, you are probably right. Try to notice if an adult is hanging around your school playground, your park or yard, and then go to where you know you can find other people.
- If you think someone is following you, cross the street and go into a store. Tell a police officer or a mother with a child. Don't try to hide -- go to where you know you can find other people.
- If someone tries to grab you, kick, punch and yell: "NO! I don't know you! You aren't my Mom (or Dad)!"
- If the person is in a car, stay as far away from the car as you can. Go into a store or turn around, and walk or run in the opposite direction the car is going.
- NEVER, ever hitchhike or accept a ride from someone. Don't go near a stranger's car. NEVER get into a car with someone you don't know, for any reason. Sometimes people use tricks -- like saying your mom is hurt, or they

lost their dog or kitten -- to try and get you to go with them. DO NOT GO WITH THEM!

- If someone does manage to get you in their car, do not put on your seatbelt. Jump out when you see people and the car has to make a stop.

***If you are trapped in an abductor's car:***

- Don't sit there quietly. The person is taking you somewhere and wants to hurt you.
- If the car has back doors, try to scramble quickly to the back seat while the car is moving.
- Try to jump out of a car that is going slow or has to stop. Try to open a window and scream.
- Try to reach over and blow the horn, or grab the steering wheel. Scream as loud as you can while you do this.
- If the car is stopped or slowed behind another car, reach over with your foot and quickly stomp on the gas pedal as hard and as long as you can. This is a time you will be much safer if you cause an accident than if you behave.

***Safety at Home***

- Many kids get home before their parents. If you come home before your mom or dad, make sure the first thing you do is call and let your mom or dad know you got home okay.
- If you come home and a window in your house is broken or a door is open that shouldn't be, don't go in. Go to a trusted neighbor, or find a phone and call 911.
- If you have to stay after school or want to play or study with a friend, tell your mom or dad.
- Don't leave your home without asking your mom or dad first. Make sure a parent knows where you are going and for how long. Always tell your mom or dad where you will be and when you will be home.
- When your family is home and the doorbell rings, always find out who it is and ask your mom or dad before you open the door.
- If you are home alone, never open the door -- unless you can see that it is a

relative or a specific person who your mom or dad said would come over to stay with you.

- NEVER tell someone you are home alone, whether they call on the phone or come by your house. Ask your mom or dad what they would like you to say, like: "My Dad's in the shower, can he call you when he gets out?"
- NEVER give information to anyone over the phone about yourself, your family or where you live. Hang up on anyone who calls to bother you or who says bad things on the phone.
- Ask your mom or dad for permission to go outside of your play area or yard or to go into someone's home.
- If you have a babysitter that hits you, touches you or makes you play games that embarrass you, tell a trusted adult, even if the babysitter told you not to.
- Keep all the windows and doors in your home locked.
- If someone tries to break into your home, call 911 immediately and give them your full address, including your apartment number if you have one. Tell them that you are at home and someone is trying to break in. Then, try calling a neighbor you know is usually home. If you can get out of the house, get out. If you can hide, hide.

### ***Gun Safety***

- If someone picks on you or threatens you, tell your parent or a trusted adult. You don't have to deal with this by yourself.
- If you get into an argument, don't let it grow into a fight. Cool off . . . walk away if that would help.
- Don't carry a weapon. You could hurt or kill someone or yourself without meaning to. The weapon could also end up being used against you. Some kids say they carry a gun or knife for protection, but the truth is if you carry a weapon you are more likely to get hurt.
- If you find a gun anywhere, DON'T TOUCH IT. The gun could be loaded and dangerous. It could also be a gun that the police are looking for because it was used in a crime. Tell your mom or dad or a trusted adult or call 911 to tell the police you found a gun.
- If someone shows you a gun, DO NOT TOUCH IT. Guns are not toys. They can kill someone or hurt them very badly. Kids have been accidentally killed



by guns, sometimes by their best friends.

- Tell the person that you don't want to be around guns because someone could get hurt or killed. Get away from the gun and the person.
- Tell a trusted adult about the gun. It's okay to tell about guns. You could help stop the person with the gun from getting hurt.
- If you hear gunfire, duck. Get down as low as you can and cover your head.

***NEWEST TIP!!!!***

***Someone can find the location of you children by the geotracking tags on your pictures. My high-tech friends advise this could happen from taking pictures on a smart phone or cell phone and posting to a website. It's scary--but phones can be programmed so photos cannot be traced as seen in the video below.***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2vARzvWxwY>