

Personal Safety Tips

- When a child is abused or abducted, the offender likely is someone the child knows. So teaching kids about “stranger danger” is not effective. In fact, there may be times when a child needs to ask a stranger for help. A good choice is to ask a mom with children.
- Along with the *check-in rule* (see page 2), teach children what to do if an adult tries to get them to go somewhere without letting them check in first—for example, make as much noise as possible, quickly get away, and find someone you trust to help. Also, explain how to use a family password for those unplanned times when you need to send another adult to pick up your child.
- Perhaps our greatest safety defense is that gut instinct (an “uh-oh” feeling) we all have. Sometimes our gut works faster than our brain. When you know that a certain person makes your child afraid or uncomfortable, do not allow that individual to be alone with the child. Learning to listen to the “uh-oh” feeling is a powerful tool to help protect kids for their entire lives.
- Teach kids to be wary of anyone who asks them to keep a secret from their parents or guardians. The child should tell the person they do not keep secrets, and then find a trusted adult to tell what happened. Even if the adult doesn’t have bad intentions with the secret, the child’s response will be a reminder for the adult to self-check his or her behavior.
- Help kids feel comfortable talking about confusing or harmful touch experiences. As children learn about their bodies and the names for all the parts, they also learn who is or is not allowed to touch them. Explain that a medical

doctor during an exam is someone allowed to touch their private parts.

- If an adult asks a child for directions or to help find a lost pet, the child’s first instinct likely is to help. Teach your child to leave the situation to find a trusted adult. Even in an emergency, the best thing to do is to leave the situation and call 911. At the same time, kids don’t need to feel useless. They can still help a friend or neighbor, but the *check-in rule* always applies.
- Attention and affection are common lures of child abductors. The need for love and attention can be used against children. Kids who receive appropriate love and attention from trusted, caring adults are more likely to be suspicious when someone offers inappropriate affection in an attempt to gain control over them.
- One of the obstacles that prevents children from seeking help in cases of abuse is the fear that they will be blamed or that parents will not love them anymore. It is easier for children to stand up for themselves if they know they have the love and support of the people closest to them. Consult a professional counselor in any case of abuse to help the child heal and to learn the best ways to support the child.
- Most importantly, always let the kids in your life know that you love them and want them to be safe.

