



# Preventing Sexual Abuse

## ***1. Talk to your children about private parts.***

Talking to children about the private parts of the body can be uncomfortable for some parents, but it is important to the healthy development of children. Furthermore, having honest conversations about topics that include body parts and health issues protects children against sexual victimization. Keep in mind the following information when considering how to talk to your children about private parts.

- Use the correct medical terms when discussing the private parts of the body. By doing so, children learn that there is no shame or secrecy surrounding private parts.
- Knowing the proper terminology prepares children to describe accurately what may have happened when disclosing sexual abuse.
- Having the experience of talking to their parents about private parts helps children get help quickly if they experience sexual victimization.
- It is not safe to keep secrets about private parts. Establishing this as a family rule will help prevent sexual victimization now and in the future.

## ***2. Be aware of grooming behavior.***

Grooming refers to the way that sexual predators connect with their potential victims. Grooming behavior may appear innocent; the goal is to establish trust with the child in order to take advantage of that trust later. It may look like flattery, generosity, sympathy, or offering special privileges or opportunities. Sometimes parents are groomed as well, so they are more likely to let the perpetrator near their children.

## ***3. Be respectful of your children's privacy.***

Teach children that it is not safe for someone to take pictures of their private parts, or ask them to look at pictures of other people's private parts. This message is consistent with laws defining child pornography as a form of sexual abuse. Parents can help protect their children from possible victimization by not taking photographs of their children in the bath, or in any way that shows their private parts. If photographs are taken, do not post them on social media sites, as doing so can potentially increase their risk of being targeted by a sexual predator.

### References

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