



1085 Poplar Avenue | Memphis, TN | 38105 | 901.525.2377

Call 1-877-54ABUSE or your local law enforcement agency 24 hours a day if you suspect child sexual abuse. Reporting child sexual abuse is protecting your child.

If you are concerned about sexually inappropriate behaviors in yourself, or another adult or child, please call **Stop It Now!** at 1-888-PREVENT.

Tennessee Parent Helpline
800.356.6767

a free 24-hour resource for parents

With professional guidance, adults can learn about sexual abuse, identify treatment options and learn how to report concerns to authorities.

For more information, visit the 'Links' page of www.MemphisCAC.org.

sexual abuse is never a child's fault
sexual abuse is a grown-up problem

It's never too early to give children information to help keep them safe.

Active protection begins with communication.

www.MemphisCAC.org



When it comes to **our children** ignorance is never **bliss.**

Memphis Child Advocacy Center

Know the facts.
Educate yourself.
Teach your child about personal safety.

The most important thing parents can do to prevent child sexual abuse is to become educated on the subject. Get the facts. Share them with your child. Be willing, able and available to discuss the issue.

Child sexual abuse is a crime that occurs in secrecy. It cannot be ignored, and parents must face the very real potential for abuse.

Active protection begins with communication. Talk to your children openly and honestly. Give them the facts and keep them safe.

Every child is at risk.

Child sexual abuse can happen to any child – boys and girls of any age, race, class or cultural and economic background. The hard facts are these:

- One of every three girls is sexually abused by the age of 18
- One of every five boys is sexually abused by the age of 18
- Over 90% of perpetrators are known and/or trusted by the child – often a parent or caretaker.

Know what abuse is, and know that **it's never a child's fault.** Anytime a person – male or female, adult or juvenile – uses a child in a sexual way, it is abuse. Sexual abuse includes touching and non-touching offenses. Abusers may force, threaten or pressure a child into sexual activity.

Forms of child sexual abuse include:

- Sexual touching and fondling
- Urging a child to touch the abuser's genitals, or to perform oral sexual acts
- Forced or unforced vaginal or anal sexual intercourse
- Exposure to adult sexual activity or pornography
- Having a sexually suggestive conversation with a child on the Internet

You may not realize your child is at risk, but a harsh reality is that most children are abused by someone they know and trust. Keep in mind:

Because the abuser may be an uncle, step-parent, family friend or other person your child loves, he or she may not recognize the victimization as abuse.

Kids often keep quiet about abuse because they think disclosure will bring consequences even worse than being victimized again.

Not all victimized children understand that they are victims, particularly teenagers who may think they are in a "relationship" with an older person.

Children must be taught to understand that sexual abuse is not their fault and they can ask an adult for help. Plain and simple, a child's safety is an adult's responsibility.



Know what you can do to protect your child.

Teach your child to trust his or her instincts. When you get that gut feeling – that funny feeling about someone – pay attention to it.

Encourage the development of your child's internal resources for self protection. If he or she feels "funny in the tummy" then something is probably not right. Let your kids know they can come to you for support, or a "gut check" on their feelings.

Teach your child the proper names for his or her private parts. Child sexual abuse is less likely to be kept secret when children have the language to explain what is happening.

Believe your child. It's important that the child knows there are people they can go to for help.

Help your child make a list of trustworthy adults. Let your child and the adults on the list know this safety net is prepared. Emphasize asking an adult for help. Let kids know to tell other adults if the first person he or she talks to doesn't believe what is happening.

Know that child abuse is never a child's fault. Do not hold children responsible. Believe them. Get help. Report.

Know the danger signs in older teens and adults. Some danger signs include:

- Asking adult partners to dress or act like a child during sexual activity
- Spending free time on activities involving children or teens, but not adults
- Making comments about children's body parts

Know what to say and how to say it.

It's never too early to give children information to keep them safe. Throughout a child's development stages, certain key points and vital facts should be reinforced. Give information such as:

- Your body is your own
- You deserve to be respected
- You can tell someone to stop if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable

Make discussion age-appropriate.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following age-appropriate conversations with children:

Ages 18 months to 3 years

As you begin naming parts of the body, include the private parts of the body. When you skip from the belly button to the knees without naming anything in between, you send a subtle message that some parts shouldn't be discussed.

Ages 3 to 5 years

Teach children that it's okay to say "No" to anyone who touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Give them permission to say "No" to adults or other children who are doing things that make them feel uncomfortable.

Ages 5 to 8 years

Talk about safe touches and unsafe touches. Talk about safety away from home. Who are they spending time with when they're not with you? What do they do when they're at a friend or relative's home?

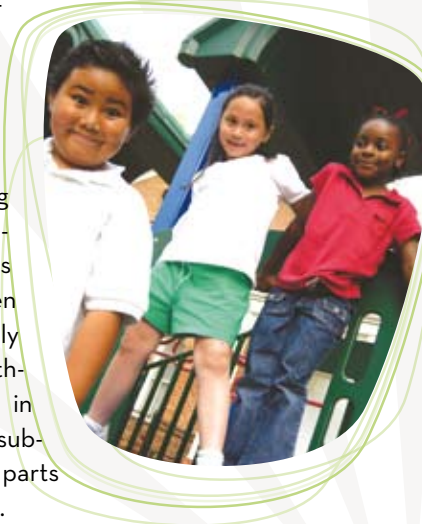
Ages 8 to 12 years

Focus on personal safety issues. Continue talking to your kids about who they're spending time with when they're not with you. Begin discussing online safety issues with your children.

Ages 13 to 18 years

Discuss issues such as rape, date rape, HIV, other sexually-transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancy.

Don't make this a one-time conversation. Talk openly and talk often.



When to raise the subject.

Use moments that come naturally, and let your child know he or she can ask questions.

When a question is asked, give honest and thorough answers. If you don't know the answer, say so and explain that you will find out. Follow through on that promise.

Link discussions about touching safety with conversations about other safety issues, such as use of car seatbelts and bicycle helmets, or how to respond to strangers. Be open and let your child know you are available to talk.

Know the signs.

The following are possible symptoms in children being abused:

- Behavioral changes, such as increased aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Unexpected fear of going to someone's house or being left alone with someone
- Acting out sexually with other children
- Sexual knowledge beyond the child's years
- Nightmares and unexplained crying



Children and healthy sexuality.

Healthy sexuality begins early and parents play an important role in development.

Among preschoolers, common behaviors include sexual language related to body parts, bathroom talk and birth questions. Masturbation, exhibition or looking at private body parts also is common. However, it is uncommon for children between the ages of 1 to 5 to discuss sexual acts or to have any sexual experiences with other children.

It is common for grade school children to inquire about menstruation, pregnancy and sexual behavior. Children age 6 to 12 may experiment with same-age children. This can include kissing, fondling, exhibitionism or role-playing. Masturbation may occur. But it is uncommon for children to use sexual words or to discuss sexual acts.

During adolescent years, 13 to 16, children often ask questions about decision-making, social relationships and sexual customs. Masturbation occurs in private. Experimentation is normal, including open-mouth kissing, fondling and body rubbing. Approximately one-third of adolescents in this age group engage in sexual intercourse.

In each stage, parents should be open with their children and always prepared to discuss sexual issues. Above all, children should know their parents are willing to discuss anything and answer their questions directly.

Go to www.MemphisCAC.org for more information and links to other helpful resources.

