

What information should we give children?

Preschool children (less than 4 years)

Basic Information

- Boys and girls are different
- Accurate names for body parts of boys and girls
- Babies come from mummies
- Rules about personal boundaries (for example, keeping private parts covered, not touching other children's private parts)
- Give simple answers to all questions about the body and bodily functions.

Safety Information

- The difference between “okay” touches (which are comforting, pleasant, and welcome) and “not okay” touches (which are intrusive, uncomfortable, unwanted, or painful)
- Your body belongs to you
- Everyone has the right to say “no” to being touched, even by grownups
- No one—child or adult--has the right to touch your private parts
- It's okay to say “no” when grownups ask you to do things that are wrong, such as touching private parts or keeping secrets from mummy or daddy
- There is a difference between a “surprise”—which is something that will be revealed sometime soon, like a present—and a “secret,” which is something you're never supposed to tell. Stress that it is never okay to keep secrets from mommy and daddy
- Who to tell if people do “not okay” things to you, or ask you to do “not okay” things to them

Young Children (approximately 4-6 years)

Basic Information

- Boys' and girls' bodies change when they get older.
- Simple explanations of how babies grow in their mothers' wombs and about the birth process.
- Rules about personal boundaries (such as, keeping private parts covered, not touching other children's private parts)
- Simple answers to all questions about the body and bodily functions
- Touching your own private parts can feel nice, but is something done in private

Safety Information

- Sexual abuse is when someone (anyone) touches your private parts or asks you to touch their private parts (adult, another child, baby sitter, etc.)
- It is sexual abuse even if it is by someone you know
- Sexual abuse is NEVER the child's fault
- If a stranger tries to get you to go with him or her, run and tell a parent, teacher, neighbor, police officer, or other trusted adult
- Who to tell if people do “not okay” things to you, or ask you to do “not okay” things to them

P.T.O.

Suggestions for Prevention Education for Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

Teach About Differing Kinds of Touches

Even young children understand that some touch hurts (pinching, biting, hitting) and is not allowed. *Some touches feel good and are good to give (such as hugs, kisses, handshakes). Other touches may either hurt or feel good, but are not okay. These include when people touch you in your private places or force you into sexual touch.* This message will be presented differently depending on the age of the child, but it is a good message for all ages. There are many books and videos addressing this topic that will supplement your message. “Sexual touching between kids or between adults and kids is not allowed and neither are touches that hurt others” are house rules that should be repeated often. There is a book list on our website under resources (ECE).

Role-Play Or Set Up A Safety Plan Around Touching Problems

If a child has an on-going problem with touch, help him set up and practice a plan for the next time. Ask them about their feelings and practice a set response (such as “when I feel I want to hit, I will hit a pillow instead.” “If I feel I want to kiss, I will come to you and ask if it is okay first.”).

Use The Idea Of Personal Space To Reinforce Boundaries

For young children or children with learning delays, using a concrete exercise may help with the idea of personal space. For example, have the child step into a hula-hoop. “Inside this bubble is your personal space and someone needs to ask permission before they come inside your bubble.” Use whatever language works for you and the child to reinforce the learning. “You are in my personal space.” Or “Don’t come in my bubble without permission.”

Don’t Forget About Regular Sexuality Education

Talk with children about changes in their bodies and their sexual feelings. As children change, so will their needs for information and skills, so talk to your children regularly. Make it okay to ask about any sexual matters, (even if you don’t know the answer - great chance to role model finding it!)