



To Parents: None of us will ever go to a doctor's office and be examined without the doctor wearing gloves. Does the doctor believe that every patient he examines has AIDS or some other contagious disease? No, but if the doctor happens examine a patient who does, he is already armed (or gloved, if you will). By encouraging you to learn about child abuse and the behavior of predators, do we want you to believe that every adult your child meets is a predator or has bad intentions? No, but if your child does encounter someone who wishes to harm them, you will have prepared them – and yourselves. You have put on the gloves!

Adapted from Dr. Anna C. Salter

Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Children and teens can be taught strategies that will help keep them safe when they are on their own both at home and outside the home. Parent-child trust and open communication are essential!

- ❖ Give your children/teens safety rules and explain to them why the rules exist. This can be done in a matter-of-fact way without scaring the younger child.
- ❖ “Stranger danger” is certainly an important concept to relay to children/teens but they also need to know that abuse most often is perpetrated by someone they know well (or that you know well). Personal safety involves teaching children/teens that they do not have to do everything adults (or other older children) ask them to do, especially if they are being asked to do things that make them feel uncomfortable, confused, or unsure.
- ❖ Children/teens need a clear explanation, with examples, of potential situations so they understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate activities or requests from others.
- ❖ Personal safety **at home** includes children/teens not letting anyone, even friends, in the house when they are home alone.
- ❖ It also includes children/teens not telling anyone who calls that they are home alone.
- ❖ Personal safety, **outside the home**, includes children/teens always letting parents know where they are going, with whom, and when they will be home.
- ❖ It also includes not stopping at anyone's home on the way to or from school without the knowledge/permission of parents.
- ❖ A child choosing a “buddy” with whom to walk to/from school adds another layer of protection.

PERSONAL SAFETY RULES: Use this space to list personal safety rules that you and your children agree will help keep them safe.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Myth or Truth?

In order to effectively prevent the abuse of children, parents should be well informed on the risks and signs of sexual abuse. Please take this "true or false" quiz to see how well you understand child sexual abuse. The answers are listed the next page.

1. Child sexual abuse is often committed by strangers. T F
2. Fifty percent of child abuse is committed by males. T F
3. Most children are so frightened by child sexual abuse that they immediately report it to a parent, teacher or trusted friend. T F
4. Most sexually abused children do not suffer physical injuries. T F
5. Most children who are sexually abused engage in the behavior because they are threatened with physical injury to themselves or a loved one. T F
6. Children may not report child sexual abuse because the behavior makes them feel good. T F
7. Children often do not report child sexual abuse because they feel responsible for the abuse occurring. T F
8. If a child is sexually abused, a physical exam can generally detect that the abuse occurred. T F
9. Most sexual abuse involves intercourse. T F
10. Girls are sexually abused more often than boys. T F
11. If a young child discloses sexual abuse, it usually happened. T F
12. If a child has been sexually abused, they may deny it if directly asked. T F
13. Over half of all child abuse is committed by parents and parent substitutes. T F
14. Developmentally delayed children are rarely sexually abused. T F
15. Many of the reports to Child Protective Services about incidents of child abuse come from those working in the school system. T F
16. Teachers are the only professionals required to report child sexual abuse to Child Protective Services. T F
17. If a child reports child sexual abuse to a mandated reporter, the law requires that it be reported immediately to Childline or law enforcement. T F
18. An adolescent girl who has been sexually abused will often react by internalizing the hurt. T F
19. An adolescent boy who has been sexually abused may react by withdrawing. T F
20. Younger children who are sexually abused may "act out" sex in play. T F

Answers: Myth or Truth Quiz

1. False The vast majority of child abuse is committed by people known to the child.
2. False About 94% of reported child abuse is committed by males.
3. False Many children are confused by child sexual abuse, but not frightened. Most children do not tell anyone immediately about the abuse.
4. True Most children who are sexually abused are not physically injured.
5. False While some children are threatened, much of the child abuse is accomplished through positive reinforcement of the child, or engaging the child in activity to the point where the child feels responsible and therefore cooperates with the behavior.
6. True Sexual abuse behavior, both physical and emotional, often makes the child feel loved, needed, and physically stimulated. Children may not immediately report the behavior.
7. True The activities of the abuser (grooming) gradually engage the child in the activity, often making the child feel responsible. In addition, the children feel that because they engaged in the behavior, it is their fault.
8. False Most child sexual abuse does not involve physical injury. 95% of reported cases have normal physical exams with no evidence of abuse.
9. False The nature of child sexual abuse, because it occurs in secrecy and does not involve activities that would scare children, usually include touching, oral sex, masturbation, fondling, or other sexual activity that does not involve intercourse.
10. True National statistics of reported cases of child sexual abuse indicate that one in four girls and one in six boys are abused before the age of 18. Experts suspect that more boys are abused than the reported cases might indicate, but boys do not report sexual abuse because it is confusing to them.
11. True If a child is talking about sexual activity, they generally have experienced it or witnessed it, because young children are generally not aware of sexual activity without personal experience.
12. True Experts estimate that approximately half of the children who are directly confronted about sexual abuse will deny that abuse occurred; they may not want the adult to get in trouble or they do not want to disappoint the adult.
13. True According to national statistics, parents or parent substitutes are responsible for over half of the child abuse cases. Parent substitutes live in the home and are responsible for the parental care of the child.
14. False Developmentally delayed children are abused at a much higher rate than normal children.
15. True The schools are one of the largest sources for reporting child abuse to Child Protective Services.
16. False PA state law requires mandated reporters who suspect child abuse to report abuse immediately at any time of day.
17. True
18. True However, not every girl will react this way; some girls may react aggressively by expressing anger or engaging in risk-taking behaviors.
19. False Boys often react by showing anger and aggression. Keep in mind that not every child reacts in the same way.
20. True Playing is often the only way that younger children can express what they are feeling and thus they act sex out in play as a way of telling what has happened to them. In addition, children play in ways that they have experienced, so they may act out sexual acts with no knowledge of the social or moral implications of what they are doing.

As a parent, what signs and symptoms should you watch for in your children? A child may exhibit a variety of signs and symptoms. Signs of child sexual abuse can be physical and/or emotional. A particular child may have one or several of the signs or symptoms.

Physical Indicators: torn or stained under clothing, pain or itching in genital area, bruises or bleeding genitalia, venereal disease
Behavioral Indicators: withdrawn, depressed; running away; truancy; uncomfortable with physical contact; mood swings
inappropriate sex play; premature understanding of sexual issues, eating disorder; sleep habit changes;
massive weight change; changes in toilet habits; sudden school difficulties; sudden changes in behavior and attitudes

Often, there are no physical signs or symptoms. If you suspect abuse, talk to your child and take your child to a professional who can determine if the signs and symptoms stem from child sexual abuse.

Predatory Behavior (also called “Grooming”).









- The predator seeks out potential victims with family problems, poor peer relationships and estrangement from parents.
- The predator seeks out potential victims who will keep secrets.
- The predator begins by spending time building trust with the child.
- Once the “friendship” is gained, the predator tells the child that he/she would never do anything to harm the child.
- The predator breaks down the child’s guard against inappropriate touching and sexual conduct.
- On occasion, the predator threatens the victim and/or his/her family or pets with harm.
- The predator engages the child in progressive discussions regarding sexual issues.
- The predator gains the trust of parents and gains access to the family environment.
- The predator invites potential victims on overnights, gives gifts, or focuses on the interests of the potential victims.
- The predator prefers children as social companions rather than adult peers of his/her own age.

(Courtesy of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana)

So, what can parents do? Become detectives! A tracker in the forest will see evidence of over 20 animals, whereas the average person may see evidence of only a few. Why is this so? **Training.** For example, broken branches in a particular pattern indicate that a wild pig recently went crashing through the bush. This special knowledge helped our forefathers survive.

Like these nature detectives, parents and guardians today must become detectives of another sort. They must become knowledgeable about the behaviors of people who prey on their children. Remember, predators conceal their behavior well; they are manipulative and sneaky. **Teach children about predators: it’s not what people look like, their age, or if you know them--it’s what they ask you TO DO that matters.** Children can learn to recognize deceptive behavior patterns

The Yello Dyno Website at <http://www.yellowdyno.com> has developed **8 Red Flags** to help parents become better detectives. One way to use **Yello Dyno’s 8 Red Flags** is to turn the statements into questions to discover if a child might be in danger. For example, ask the child “Is there a much older child or an adult who spends lots of time with you?” If you find that two or three of the **8 Red Flags** fit a situation, then you need to take a closer look.

 <p>A much older child or adult spends excessive amounts of time with your child.</p>	<p>A person continually offers to care for your child to give you a “breather” or time to yourself.(He/she often does not want any payment for watching your child.)</p> 
<p>Someone enjoys being with your child more than you do. (Do you spend enough time with your child?)</p> 	 <p>A person comes to your house regularly to spend time with your child or to transport your child to activities.</p>
 <p>Your child has new toys or gifts that you did not buy.</p>	<p>A person engages in activities that involve only him/herself and your child, activities that do not require others to be present.</p> 
<p>Your child speaks knowledgeably of places and/or activities that you did not introduce to him or her.</p> 	 <p>A person is preoccupied with and /or often stares at your child.</p>

Used with permission: Yello Dyno <http://www.yellowdyno.com>