

MIDDLESEX CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

BODY SAFETY RULES: TALK ABOUT IT – A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

TEACH YOUR CHILD ...

1. **To use proper names for all body parts.** Children should feel as comfortable saying penis, vulva, vagina, or breast as they do saying mouth, elbow, or leg. They shouldn't feel ashamed or embarrassed about asking questions about their body or about telling if they are touched. Proper names also help children clearly describe what happened if something goes wrong.
2. **Simple, easy-to-follow body safety rules.** For example, "Private parts are covered by a swimsuit. Nobody should ask to see, touch, or take pictures of your private parts. Nobody should ask you to look at or touch their private parts."
3. **Body safety is personal safety.** For example, "You have to wear a helmet when you ride your bike. You have to put on your seat belt when you are in a car. You have to look both ways when you cross the street. Nobody can look at your private parts, touch your private parts, take pictures of your body parts, or ask you to touch their private parts." Make sure your child knows these rules and follows them everywhere – at home, at a friend's house, at school, and in the community. Explain exceptions: a parent or caregiver may help with bathing; a doctor may examine them with a trusted adult present.
4. **They are the boss of their body.** Don't force your child to hug or kiss anyone they don't want to (even grandma). Offer alternatives, such as a high five or a wave. Reinforce that their body is their own and that they can protect it.
5. **To speak up if anyone breaks a body safety rule.** Make sure your child knows they should say "NO," get away if they can, and tell you or another trusted adult if anyone breaks a body safety rule. They should keep telling people until they are safe. Reassure them they won't be in trouble for speaking up, even if it is someone they or you love, trust, or care about.
6. **The difference between surprises and secrets.** A surprise is something you keep quiet for a little while, and then everyone finds out and feels happy, like a birthday present. A secret is something you keep hidden forever. We don't keep secrets, especially about body safety. You should tell if someone asks you to keep a secret about bodies, even if someone says they will get in trouble or that someone will get hurt.
7. **Who their trusted adults are.** Help your child name 3-5 trusted adults they can tell if someone breaks a body safety rule, such as a parent, grandparent, teacher, or coach.

Begin body safety conversations early (age 3) and review them regularly. Let your child know it is safe to talk about the subject by incorporating body safety into regular conversations. Keep the tone matter-of-fact so your child learns safety, not fear.

For guidance on what to do if your child tells you someone broke a body safety rule, see our "How to Respond When a Child Discloses Abuse" handout.



National Children's Alliance

