



STRANGER AWARENESS GUIDELINES

Each year, many children disappear in the United States. Most child abductors are people the child knows. However, sometimes the abductor is a stranger. As your child reaches age three, it is time to begin teaching stranger awareness. Use a calm and caring manner when teaching these concepts to a young child. The goal is to empower your child and instill confidence rather than frightening him or her. Teach only the concepts you feel your child is ready for. Add more information later. Make this an on-going process as your child matures.

Concepts To Teach Your Child

- A stranger is anyone you don't know.
- Never give your name or address to a stranger.
- Avoid conversations with strangers if your parents are not with you.
- You can say "no" to a stranger.
- Never get in a car or go anywhere with a stranger.
- Never take anything from a stranger.

Continued

As your child gets older and is away from you more often to walk to school or play in the neighborhood, teach additional concepts.

- Be cautious in public restrooms. Go with a friend or ask someone to stand outside.
- If a stranger asks for help, respond by saying you'll have to check with your parents first.
- Walk home with a friend whenever possible or call home when you leave so your parents will know when to expect you.
- Use the same route when going to familiar places.
- Play where there are people around.
- Avoid playing in secluded areas.
- If you need help, go to someone "official" like a store clerk rather than asking a stranger.

Your Older Child Should Know:

- How to call for help in an emergency.
- His full name, parents' names, address and phone number including area code.
- How to use a pay phone or cell phone.
- How to make a long distance call.
- How to reach parents at work.
- A "secret" password that parents can give to a person who may have to pick up the child unexpectedly.
- How to answer the door and phone safely.
- The areas of the body that are private —those covered by a bathing suit.
- How to recognize the uneasy feeling you get when someone touches or

treats you inappropriately and the three rules to follow if you get that feeling:

1. Yell “no!”
2. Get away
3. Tell a grown-up you trust

Parental Responsibilities

- Remember, it CAN happen to you.
- Know your child’s friends.
- Know what your child is wearing each day.
- Be involved in your child’s activities.
- Have a family “password.”
- Question any gifts your child brings home.
- Never leave a young child unattended in a car, shopping area or other public place.
- Avoid putting your child’s name in a visible place on clothing and backpacks.
- Know how and where you can obtain your child’s medical and dental records.
- Consider having your child fingerprinted.
- Update your child’s height and weight on an annual basis.
- Keep a current photograph.

Keep Teaching

Talk to your child periodically and review stranger awareness concepts. Read books or watch videos on the subject together. You can ask your local librarian for suggestions. Role play with your child. “What would you do if a man at the playground asked you to help find his little white kitten?”

Continued

Then pretend to be the stranger. Help your child think through what to do. Talking about these issues can be scary, but good education and communication will help keep your child safe.

Stranger on the Internet

The internet can be a dangerous tool used by sexual predators to prey on children. As a parent, it is your responsibility to protect your children by monitoring computer activities.

- Keep your computer in a “public” part of your home so you are able to monitor your children’s activities.
- Teach children not to give out personal information: name, address, phone number, school name without parent’s permission.
- Teach children to never agree to meet someone you met online.
- Never send pictures or other personal material to someone you meet online.
- Establish guidelines with your children for computer use and time limits.
- Teach children to immediately report if someone online says to “keep this a secret from your parents,” That is a **WARNING SIGN**.
- Know your child’s screen names and passwords and be sure they don’t reveal personal information.

For more parenting information, contact the Family Life Education Office at (605) 322-3660.

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Children’s Hospital & Clinics
(605) 322-KIDS (322-5437)
www.AveraChildrens.org