

Are you concerned your child is being sexually abused?

How do you talk to them about it? Follow these guidelines to ensure your child feels comfortable enough disclosing to you if they are being abused.

- Have this conversation somewhere that your child feels comfortable.
- Speak privately. DO NOT ask your child about child abuse in front of a person who may be abusing the child.
- Stay calm. It's important to speak and listen calmly. Your child needs to feel safe and loved during this conversation.
- Begin by letting the child know that you are having this conversation because it's your job to keep them safe.
- Talk about body boundaries and explain to your child when it is ok for an adult or other person to touch or look at their private parts. These kinds of "safe/comfortable/appropriate" touches should never be a secret. Examples are bathing, using the restroom, addressing health issues or injuries.
- Reassure your child that it's ok to tell the truth and that you are not going to be mad or upset with the child for their answers.
- Talk with your child about secrets. Sometimes abusers will tell children that sexual abuse is a secret just between them. They may ask the child to promise to keep it secret. When you talk to your child, talk about times that it's okay not to keep a secret, even if they made a promise.
- Then, ask if anyone has been touching them or their private parts in a way that doesn't feel ok or that makes them feel uncomfortable. Know that sexual abuse can feel good to the victim, so asking your child if someone is hurting them may not get the information that you are looking for.

- Speak in a nonjudgmental way, and take care to avoid shaming your child as you ask questions.
- If there was something your child said or did that made you concerned, ask about that. Don't push your child for answers.
- Ask your child open clarifying questions, only to the point where it leads you to have reasonable concern. As tempting as it may be, do not continue to ask for details. This can contaminate a child's disclosure of abuse and is best handled by trained professionals at KIDS Center.
- If your child discloses abuse, thank them for being brave. Tell them that you believe them, and that you will be talking with other adults who keep kids safe to make sure it doesn't happen again.

With any disclosures or suspicion of abuse, you must make a report!

- Call local law enforcement's non-emergency number or dial 911 if there is immediate danger.
- Call the Oregon Statewide Hotline at 855-503-SAFE

ADAPTED FROM:

RAINN 2009- <http://www.rainn.org/get-information/types-of-sexual-assault/child-sexual-abuse/if-you-suspect>

Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children

