

Watchdog and Rubi



Although our province is a safe place to live, it is always a good idea to learn more about what you as a parent can do to increase your children's safety. This pamphlet outlines some simple things you can do to protect your children from harm.

The advice in this pamphlet cannot guarantee your children's complete protection. But if you follow this advice, you will reduce the risk to their security. The *Watchdog and Rubi* colouring book presents important safety recommendations in a non-threatening manner. Please adopt a similar tone when discussing personal safety with your children.

Teach your children

- ✓ to know their full name, age, address, area code, city, province, home telephone number, parents' work numbers and how to make both local and long-distance calls.
- ✓ to walk and play with other children and to avoid unsupervised playgrounds or deserted areas where strangers may approach unobserved.
- ✓ to turn down all requests for assistance from strangers.
- ✓ to remember "No-Go-Tell." If someone, whether a stranger or someone they know, asks them to do something they don't want to do, teach them to say "No" and leave that person "Go" and "Tell" an adult.
- ✓ to refuse gifts or rides from strangers. Ask them to remember the stranger's description, car and licence plate number.

Tell your children to seek the safety of their home, Block Parent house or the nearest public place if they are approached by a stranger.

- ✓ to take three giant steps away from any vehicle that approaches them.
- ✓ not to answer the phone. Have an answering machine screen incoming calls.
- ✓ not to open doors or windows when they are home alone. They should identify all callers visually through a peephole or window. Use a password to restrict access to your home.
- ✓ not to engage in any conversation through a door or window.
- ✓ how to properly use 911 or contact the police. Tell them to call 911 only when someone is hurt, there is a fire or they feel threatened or in danger.
- ✓ that police officers in uniform are friends who should be trusted.

What you can do

- ✓ give your children's school or day-care the names of persons to whom your child may be released and provide telephone numbers where you can be reached in an emergency.
- ✓ remember what clothing your children are wearing in case they get lost. Write your children's names on the inside of their clothing where it cannot be seen as they are more likely to trust strangers who know their names.
- ✓ keep up-to-date records of your children including recent photographs, their height, weight, medical and dental histories and, if possible, a video and fingerprint record. These records are

- ✓ invaluable tools for finding lost children. Many local agencies provide such services. Check with your local police service.
- ✓ interview potential babysitters and obtain references from other parents. Check if they have completed a babysitting course.
- ✓ know the telephone numbers and addresses of your children's playmates and insist that they ask permission to visit friends.
- ✓ accompany your children everywhere and never let them play or loiter in public places or near public washrooms.
- ✓ be cautious of adults who take an unusual interest in spending time alone with your children.

Teach your children about their bodies

- ✓ use the proper names of their body parts and explain that no one has the right to touch them without your permission.
- ✓ discuss sexual abuse in an open and sincere manner in the same way you would discuss other safety guidelines.
- ✓ play "what if" games that simulate threatening situations and offer your children the chance to practise the proper responses to personal threats.

Tell your children

- ✓ *Your body is your own and no one should touch or hurt you. If someone does touch you, say "No!" and then tell me.*
- ✓ *If someone does something to you or asks you to do something to them, tell me.*

- ✓ *Sometimes friendly people or people you know do things that are not nice. If they touch you or ask you to touch them in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell me.*
- ✓ *Always tell me if these things happen to you because I love you and want you to be safe.*

If you suspect that your children have been abused

- ✓ contact the police immediately.
- ✓ let your children know you believe them and are not angry.
- ✓ tell your children you do not blame them for what has happened and you will do everything possible to protect them from future abuse.

What to do if your children are missing

Search your home, playgrounds and surrounding properties. Check with playmates, friends and relatives. Contact your local police and be prepared to provide the following information about your children:

- ✓ full physical description.
- ✓ location and description of birthmarks, scars or other identification marks.
- ✓ most recent photograph and fingerprint record.
- ✓ description of clothing worn at the time of disappearance.
- ✓ medical conditions or problems.

- ✓ recent problems at home, school or with playmates.
- ✓ possibility of abduction by your spouse or former spouse.
- ✓ missing items such as favourite clothes or possessions.

How you can become involved in child safety

- ✓ join your local Block Parents or Block Watch Association.
- ✓ build a home information centre that includes a map of your neighbourhood and its play areas. Have your children notify you where they will be at all times and when they will return.
- ✓ list telephone numbers of neighbours and relatives you trust who can be contacted in case of emergency.
- ✓ have immediate access to important telephone numbers (fire, police, ambulance) and teach your children how and when to call them.

For more information

Contact your local police service for more information on how to keep your children safe.