

Tell and keep telling

Teach children that some secrets can be happy, like birthday presents, but no one should be asked to keep bad or yucky secrets. Teach children to tell a safe and trusted adult if someone tells them something is secret and it feels yucky, or if someone touches them in a way they don't like. Encourage kids to tell and keep telling until someone listens.

Talk to children about how they might tell someone and try out different scenarios: What would you do if the adult didn't listen? What if they told you to keep your worry secret or to forget about it? It's never too late to tell.

Look, Listen, Act

If a child has unexplained changes in behaviour, make time to talk to them.

If a child tells you a worry they have TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY. It is rare for a child to make up abuse.



If a child has a worry about a person or something that has happened take it seriously. If you're not sure what to do, check it out with experts.

Contact the following organisations with questions or concerns. You don't have to give your name.

Specialist help
www.toah-nnest.org.nz

In an
emergency
phone Police
on 111

It's not OK
0800 456 450

Child, Youth
and Family
0508 326 459

 **TOAH-NNEST**
Te Ohaakii a Hine - National Network Ending Sexual Violence Together

www.toah-nnest.org.nz

IT IS
OK TO ASK
FOR
HELP

How can I protect
my child from
sexual abuse?

Know what to look out for
& start the conversation



What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is involving a child or young person in sexual activities, touching them in a sexual way, or using a child for sexual gratification. Children cannot give consent to sexual activities under the age of 16 years.

Children should not be expected to stop sexual abuse – adults need to act to keep them safe.

Most parents of children who are sexually abused did not expect it to happen – but about 90% of child sexual abuse is by someone known to the family.

New Zealand research shows about 1 in 4 women and 1 in 8 men have experienced sexual abuse, often during childhood.

Children can be abused by anyone – any gender, ethnicity or age. People who sexually abuse children need specialist help to stop their behaviour.

Grooming is the behaviour someone uses to gain access to children in order to sexually abuse them. Grooming often involves many activities that seem OK, like babysitting, outings, buying treats and presents. Abusers groom the child as well as the adults around the child. This makes it easier to access the child and harder for the child to tell an adult and be believed.

What should I look out for?

One thing we can all do is know the signs that sexual abuse may be happening to a child.

These include:

- a change in sleeping, eating, toileting, washing behaviour
- becoming withdrawn
- problems trusting others, avoiding certain people and places
- acting younger than their age, becoming clingy and tearful
- displaying sexualised behaviour or language which is age inappropriate
- becoming angry, hostile, aggressive to others or self-harming
- learning or concentration difficulties
- telling you about someone or something that worries them.

If you're worried a child or young person's sexual behaviour is inappropriate for their age, check it out with experts.

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Adults need to act to keep children safer from sexual abuse. Know how children normally behave and who they spend time with.

Personal safety can be taught to children, and adults around children, in the same ways we teach water safety and road safety.

Talking about emotions

Create safe relationships with children where they can share feelings and problems and know they will be taken seriously. Children who have warm relationships with many safe adults are less vulnerable to abuse.

Talking about our bodies

Praise children for the wonderful things their bodies can do.

Listen when children say 'no' to touch they don't like – even if it's just because Uncle's beard is too scratchy or Aunty hugs too hard.

Teach the correct names of all body parts, including private parts for example when washing/drying a child. Deal with sexual questions and sexual play such as masturbation calmly – curiosity is a normal part of child sexual development.

OK and not OK touch

Teach children that some parts of the body are private such as under your underwear. Outline boundaries and respond to questions honestly.

