

Dear **Pre K & Kindergarten** Parent(s),

The lessons in the **Talking About Touching; A Personal Safety Curriculum* emphasize the importance of following safety rules. You can help your child learn to be safe by talking about and practicing safety rules at home. I hope these suggestions will be useful to you.

Personal Safety: The goal is to increase children's knowledge of and adherence to rules that will help keep them safe.

Traffic Safety. Children will be able to identify the need for traffic safety rules, demonstrate and follow traffic safety skills and say "NO" to unsafe activity.

In our traffic safety lesson, children learn to look in **all** directions before crossing the street. Whenever you go for a walk with your child, you can talk about and practice walking safely in your neighborhood. Assertiveness skills will be introduced by teaching children how to respond when they are asked to do something that is unsafe. This skill is reinforced throughout the curriculum. Children will also practice telling a grown-up when someone has asked them to break a safety rule. **Telling** is a key prevention skill. We will help children be clear and specific with their words when they tell.

The Always Ask First Rule. Children will be able to describe appropriate responses to being asked to go somewhere with someone.

Most young children know that they should not go anywhere with strangers, but they may willingly go with someone they know. It is important for children to learn to ask their parents or the "**person in charge**" for permission before they go anywhere with anyone. This strategy protects them from potentially dangerous situations and helps parents know exactly where their children are. This lesson also reinforces the idea that it is okay to ask parents/caregivers for help in decision making. You may need to spend extra time with your children to help them identify which grown-up they should ask for permission. The "person in charge" would be any other person in a caretaking role, such as a foster parent, grandparent, aunt or babysitter.

Touching Safety: The goal is to strengthen children's ability to distinguish between safe touch and unsafe touch and to increase children's knowledge of safety rules about touching.

Getting and Giving Safe Touches. Children will be able to identify safe, caring touches, know that safe touches help people feel cared for, loved and important. Hugs, handshakes, pats on the back and holding hands are all examples of safe touches. Safe touches are good for everyone.

Safe touches are positive, caring touches that enrich our lives. As a parent, be sure to always ask permission to give hugs or other touches. You may also need to set clear boundaries for the way children touch you and each other. Be sure to let them know when they touch you in a way that you don't like or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Unsafe Touches. Children will be able to recognize unsafe touches, how to deal with them and demonstrate assertive behavior.

For children to live safe and healthy lives, they need to learn to identify the difference between safe touch and unsafe touch. It is not, however, realistic that a young child will always be able to stop hurtful behavior from an older or more powerful person. For this reason, it is important to help and support your children in telling, as well as encourage them to be assertive.

Unsafe touches include touches that hurt our bodies or our feelings. Pushing is an example of an unsafe touch. The touch becomes exploitation when one person is bullying the other. As children learn and practice new skills, you will need to coach them.

Learning the Touching Rule. Children will be able to identify the Touching Rule.

The Touching Rule is: “A bigger person should not touch your private parts except to keep you clean and healthy”. If it is not to keep you clean, and not to keep you healthy, you can say “NO”, Get Away and Tell someone.

Developing a clear, recognizable vocabulary for body parts will help children appreciate and value their own bodies in a healthy way. The curriculum offers several choices for naming private body parts: simply used “private body parts” or “the parts of the body covered by a bathing suit”; parents are encouraged to use anatomically correct names with their children.

What is meant by keeping children clean and healthy? Sometimes children need help keeping clean, and babies always need help getting clean. When babies get their diapers changed, someone has to wipe their bottoms. This is a time when a bigger person needs to touch a baby’s private body parts. This is a type of safe touch. Sometimes older children need help getting clean too. Parents might help wash the child’s back or hair or wipe their bottom. A doctor may also check a child’s private body parts. These are all examples of safe touches because it is to help keep children clean and healthy.

Continue to encourage self-care (washing hands often). When children are hurt or tired, encourage them to describe where it hurts (head, arm, stomach) and what it feels like (itchy, burning, stiff). Children who are aware of their bodies and physical sensations are better able to disclose if they have been abused.

Safety Steps. Children will be able to identify the three Safety Steps (Say words that mean “NO”, to Get Away, and to Tell a grown-up), identify grown-ups to tell if someone breaks the Touching Rule, and never keep secrets about touching.

Children are encouraged to use the Safety Steps when someone has broken The Touching Rule. The first step guides children to refuse with words. Encourage children to think of and practice different ways to say “NO”. The second step guides children to remove themselves from the situation. This could be as simple as getting off someone’s lap, or it could mean going to the neighbor’s house. The third step guides children to tell a grown-up as soon as possible, and to keep telling until someone listens and/or helps. Encourage your children to think of several resource/support people to tell if someone asks them to break a safety rule or the “Touching Rule”.