

**Child Safety week :6-12 September 2009** - Now is an opportunity for parents and teachers to reinforce key messages to children about protective behaviours (feeling, acting and being safe). This is a prime time to address these issues at home. Key messages worth discussing with your children are:

---

***We all have the right to feel safe all the time***

***Nothing is so awful that you can't talk with someone about it***

Although many parents alert children to 'stranger danger' the reality is that children are more likely to experience abuse from a person who is known to them (a relative, friend or family acquaintance).

**Things you can do to help protect your child**

- Talk to your child – keep the communication open at every age
- Discuss with your children about their body – their public and private parts and the proper names for these parts.
- Teach them how to recognise if they are feeling unsafe (eg feeling tense in their body, sweating, stomach pains, feeling sick).
- Use the words 'safe or unsafe' when possible to give them clearer understanding of what these words mean and how they feel.
- Talk to your child about ways of being safe eg. going straight home after school, walk in a group, avoid isolated areas, communicate to the parent/ teacher/responsible adult, when they have uncomfortable feelings.
- Avoid being an alarmist but have an action plan for those 'just in case' situations. This plan should include: people they can talk to at home or school about this; things to do if they are approached eg. walk/ run away, scream etc; identify safe places to go to at home or on the way home; what to do if their friend tells them they are feeling unsafe.
- Talk to your child about the dangers of 'secrets' that make them or others feel uncomfortable
- Help your child identify who they feel comfortable to talk with. Get them to identify 5 adults from home/ school/ family/family friends

As a parent it is up to you to put in place everything possible to ensure your child's safety. If you feel uncertain or uncomfortable about a situation then do what is needed to put your mind at ease even though your child might feel you are over-reacting. It's more important to have no regrets. Talk to your guidance officer if you need help.

Some helpful contacts include:

- **Parent Line: 1300 30 1300**
- **Department of Communities (Child Safety Services): 1800 811 810**
- **Lifeline: 13 11 14 (24 hour crisis counselling line)**
- **Family Planning Queensland: [www.fpq.com.au](http://www.fpq.com.au) for ideas and resources**