



Preventing sexual assault

Ages 8-9

Did you know?

- Sexual assault is an act that is sexual in nature, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the victim or in some cases through emotional manipulation or blackmail, especially when children are involved (Government of Quebec, 2001).
- The abuser is often someone the child knows (a friend, neighbour or relative) and whom the child trusts. In rarer cases, the abuser is a stranger.
- No matter what their social background, both girls and boys can be the victim of sexual assault.
- Sexual assault has a negative impact on victims and their families.
- Only 30% of children who are victims of sexual assault talk about it before they become adults. It is difficult for children to talk about it, especially when the abuser is someone they know.
- One out of three girls and one out of six boys will be the victim of sexual assault during their childhood.
- You are the best person to talk to them about this subject.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?



Explain to your child what sexual assault is

What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault refers to any time someone forces someone else to look at or touch his or her private parts, or when this person looks at or touches the private parts of someone else. This is behaviour that can make you uncomfortable. For example: someone touches the penis or vagina of a child and asks the child to touch his or her private parts; someone shows the child his or her genitals, etc.

Who commits sexual assault?

Most of the time, sexual assault is committed by someone a child knows, who is nice and who the child likes. Sexual assault may also be committed by a stranger who intends to do the child harm. Abusers can be men, women, adults or adolescents.

Where can sexual assault take place?

Sexual assault can be committed in different places: in public areas (parks, schools, arenas, etc), in the street or on the Internet. Most often, it happens at the child's home or the home of someone else.

How do abusers lure children?

Whether they are known to the child or not, sexual abusers use all sorts of methods to commit these acts: telling children they are special, calling them by their name, offering gifts, asking for help, using blackmail or threats, etc.

Encourage children to talk to an adult they trust about any situation of assault that they may have experienced or witnessed

What they need to remember is that they have to listen to their inner voice telling them they are in danger (e.g., they feel bad, are afraid, are angry, or are sad and uncomfortable). They need to talk to someone they trust so that the situation stops. They need to talk about it, even if they promised to keep it a secret and they're afraid (e.g., fear of threats or of not being believed; fear that someone they love will be hurt). Adults are there to protect children.

Help children identify adults they can trust

Together, identify adults that they can talk to and whom you also trust:

- when you aren't there
- when they are home alone
- when they're at school, etc.

Place a list of these people with their contact information in a place that your child can easily access.



Tips

Reassure children: They don't have to be wary of everyone. On the contrary, they can trust many adults. Also, not all children will be the victims of sexual assault. However, they have to pay attention and follow the basic safety rules to avoid danger.

Value their strengths and allow them to express emotions. Encourage them to trust themselves and to listen to their "inner voice" (their alarm system). This will make it easier for them to react to a possible situation of sexual assault and to trust you when they face problems.

Pay attention to sudden and unusual changes in your child's behaviour. This could be sign of a problem. It's your role as an adult to determine what's going on and to offer your help.

WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

Book for parents

ROBERT, Jocelyne. *Parlez-leur d'amour et de sexualité*, Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1999.

Books for children and their parents

GERVAIS, Jean. *L'étrange voisin de Dominique*, Boréal Jeunesse, 1988.

ROBERT, Jocelyne. *Te laisse pas faire! Les abus sexuels expliqués aux enfants*, Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2000.

TIBO, Gilles. *La petite fille qui ne souriait plus*, Soulières Éditeur, 2001.

Web sites

www.agressionssexuelles.gouv.qc.ca/en/

www.kidsintheknow.ca

Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or contact the Director of Youth Protection in your region.

Author: Geneviève Gagnon, Direction de santé publique de l'Agence de Lanaudière

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