



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

[What Is Child Sexual Abuse?](#)
[Who Are the Victims?](#)
[Who Are the Perpetrators?](#)
[What Are the Effects?](#)
[Can Children Recover?](#)
[Protecting Children](#)
[What To Do](#)
[Where To Go for Help](#)

Understanding Child Sexual Abuse

Education, Prevention, and Recovery

Protecting Children From Sexual Abuse

- The typical advice "Don't Talk to Strangers" doesn't apply in this case. Most sexual perpetrators are known to their victims.
- Do not instruct children to give relatives hugs and kisses. Let them express affection on their own terms.
- Teach your children basic sexual education. Teach them that no one should touch the "private" parts of their body. A health professional can also help to communicate sex education to children if parents are uncomfortable doing so.
- Develop strong communication skills with your children. Encourage them to ask questions and talk about their experiences. Explain the importance of reporting abuse to you or another trusted adult.
- Teach your children that sexual advances from adults are wrong and against the law. Give them the confidence to assert themselves against any adult who attempts to abuse them.
- Make an effort to know children's friends and their families.
- Teach your children that their bodies are their own. That it is OK to say they do not want a hug or that certain kinds of contact make them uncomfortable.
- Instruct your child to never get into a car with anyone without your permission.
- It is important to remember that physical force is often not necessary to engage a child in sexual activity. Children are trusting and dependent and will often do what is asked of them to gain approval and love.

[What To Do If You Think a Child You Know Has Been the Victim of Sexual Abuse](#) ►