

## Helping a Sexually Abused Child

You can help the child in these ways:

### **Be calm**

Children are generally sensitive to your reactions and may interpret your anger or disgust over the incident as anger or disgust at them. Remaining calm will help minimise the child's tendency to feel "different" as a result of the abuse. It will also help the child regain his/her sense of dignity which is often the first thing lost when a person is sexually abused.

### **Believe and affirm the child**

Let the child know that telling you about the abuse is a good thing to do. Believing the child is a major step in helping the child overcome the trauma from the abuse. Statements like "I believe you" or "it's not your fault" can help in the healing process.

### **Reassure the child**

Let the child know that you still love, like and care for her. Tell her that you will do everything you can to help, but make only those promises you know you can keep.



**All child abuse cases are treated with confidentiality.**

If there is a case of child sexual abuse, or should you need more information you can contact:

Welfare Department  
Tingkat 20 Bangunan KOMTAR  
10564 Penang  
Tel: 04-650 5258

Police (headquarters)  
Daerah Timur Laut  
17060 Penang  
Tel: 04-261 5522

General Hospital  
Jalan Utama  
10460 Penang  
Tel: 04-229 3333



**Pusat Kesedaran Wanita  
(Women's Centre for Change)**

24-D Jalan Jones  
10250 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia  
Tel: 04-228 0342  
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**WOMEN'S CENTRE  
FOR CHANGE**

The Women's Centre for Change ("WCC") is doing a series of pamphlets to equip you with more knowledge of your rights.



# Staying Safe

## A pamphlet on Child Sexual Abuse

Dear Parents,

*Congratulations! You are now the proud parents of a school going child.*

*As a responsible parent, you must have prepared your child well for school life - advice on road safety, classroom behaviour, tips on making friends, etc.*

*We, the Women's Centre for Change of Penang, are very concerned about the safety of your child from another aspect - sexual violation of the child.*

*Lately we hear so much about sexual abuse of children. We need to teach our children how to protect themselves. As we cannot be with them all the time, it is our responsibility to teach them ways to prevent and handle any sexual abuse. It can happen in the home or outside of the home.*

*The Women's Centre for Change hopes that this pamphlet will give you useful tips and information on the subject of child sexual abuse.*

*We believe that, as parents, you are the best people to teach your children on how to protect themselves and be safe.*



## What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual satisfaction of an adult/older child.

It occurs when an adult uses his power or authority and takes advantage of a child's trust and respect to involve the child in sexual activity that is inappropriate for his/her age.

## What can Parents Do?

### Protect your child

Children need to be protected from situations where they can be sexually abused. Be careful who you leave your child with and where you leave him/her. Remember abusers can be friends or family members as well as strangers.

### Understand the myth about strangers

It is a myth to think that only strangers will sexually abuse a child. Anyone who has access to children can abuse them. Statistics show that in 85% of reported cases, the offender is someone known to the child.

As such it is important that you teach your child to recognise abuse and quickly tell a trusted adult – you or his/her teacher – about the incident.

### Trust your child

Build a good relationship with your child so that he/she is able to talk to you. Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. Small children cannot make up stories about people doing sexual things to them. They simply do not

have enough knowledge to be able to make up such stories. Believe your child.

Your child will need your trust and support when he/she seeks your help. Try not to use comments like "I told you so" or "Why are you so stupid" as this will cause the child to blame himself/herself. Use positive statements like "I believe you" or "I'm sorry this happened to you".

### Your child is not to be blamed

Usually children are too scared to tell you about being abused as the abuser is someone who has power or authority over them. They could also be afraid that you will be angry at them or blame them for what happened.

You would want him/her to trust you enough to be able to tell you about any incidents that have occurred, including those involving love and sex with anyone. So learn to keep calm and convince your child that what happened is not his/her fault.

### What Shall I Teach My Child?

Children should be taught to love and respect their own bodies, and that there are certain rules regarding what adults can do to them. It is also important to emphasise that there are right and wrong ways of touching, often children are able to judge whether something is right or wrong by trusting their feelings and listening to their feelings.

### It's My Body. My body is special and important. I need to love and care for it

You could teach your child that what is covered by his/her underwear is called her private parts and that they belong only to him/her and should not be touched by just anybody or without his/her permission. Emphasise that the private parts are touched only for the purpose of hygiene and also for medical reasons, for example by a doctor.

### Appropriate vocabulary for parts of the body

Use anatomical words like penis, vagina, breasts rather than judgemental words like "pok-pok" (vagina) and "ku-ku" (penis).

Using the correct words for the body parts are important because :

- it ensures that, if someone touches the child's private parts he/she can accurately tell you what happened
- it shows respect for your child and his/her body
- communicates the seriousness of the subject calmly and as a matter-of-fact.

### There are different types of touches

There are good touches and bad touches. The good touch makes a child feel good and safe, e.g. a mother's hug.

The bad touch makes a child confused and uncertain about his/her

feelings, e.g. stroking or touching the private body parts by an older person.

Teach them to say "Stop It" when a touch makes them feel funny and confused.



### Listen to your Inner Voice (intuition)

Children can learn to trust their feelings about people and touches and that there is a voice within themselves (intuition) which will instinctively tell them when something is wrong.

When a touch makes a child feel confused and uncomfortable, that is his/her inner voice (intuition) telling him/her that the touch is bad. Teach your child to trust that inner voice.

### No Secrets in our family

Try not to have secrets amongst family members. Often abusers tell children that "this is a secret between you and me". This causes guilt feelings and as such he/she does not tell about the abuse.