

Note to Parents:

Streetproofing your children is one of the best ways to keep them safe when you are not around. Streetproofing is really about talking with your children and empowering them with the tools to be safe. They are never too young or too old to learn the rules. Especially when your children are younger they should know what an emergency is, who to call and where to go for help.

According to their age, teach your children ...

- their full name, address and phone number. (Never place their names or personal information on the outside of their clothing or belongings.)
- how and when to call the police.
- how to make long distance and collect phone calls.
- to go to a store clerk or security guard if they get lost or separated in the mall.
- about their bodies - the more they know the better they understand that no one has the right to touch them anywhere that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Sports Safety

Keep your children safe as they play:

- Make sure they are always wearing a helmet and knee pads when riding a bike. It is the law for youth under the age of 18 to wear a helmet.
- Teach them to use hand signals when stopping or making a turn and equip their bikes with reflectors and a working horn.
- Teach the importance of vigilance - tell them to watch out for traffic, pedestrians, stones, rocks, potholes and trash on the roads and sidewalks.
- Encourage them to play in designated sporting areas and not to skateboard, bike ride or roller blade by creeks, ditches or storefronts.

Stranger Danger

Children often do not know the true definition of “a stranger”. This can confuse them when it comes to recognizing who can be trusted. Your child needs to know the 2 elements:

1. A stranger is anyone that your child does not know well.

Predators, however, often try to build relationships with the child alone by hanging out at playgrounds and parks to gain trust.

Therefore...

2. A stranger is anyone that you (the parent) do not know well.

Reinforcing these elements will help them understand that strangers are not just “odd-looking” people - strangers are just people that fall into these categories.

Equip them for encounters with strangers by telling them the following:

- “Do not talk to strangers.”
- “Never go anywhere with a stranger... If they ask you to go anywhere with them, just yell “**NO**”, “**HELP**”, or “**FIRE**”, run away and tell a trusted adult.”
- “If a stranger stops to ask a question, stay as far back as possible even if you can’t hear them.” (A popular tactic is to speak quietly on purpose to draw children closer)
- “If a stranger grabs you, start to wiggle, squirm or spin around to get away.”
- “Do not accept gifts or money from strangers... no matter what they promise.”
- “Don’t keep secrets. If someone asks you to keep a secret, tell a trusted adult right away.”
- “If the stranger does not know the code word/phrase*, then leave and tell a trusted adult right away .”

Street Safety

The street or the park is a carefree place that children like to play. They often discount the dangers that are present everyday.

According to their age, your children should...

- ⇒ ...always play with a buddy and inform a parent or trusted adult of their whereabouts. If walking to school, they should walk with and/or join other groups of children.
- ⇒ ...make their way home once the streetlights are on (If allowed out after dark, they should be with a group of friends in a well lit area.)
- ⇒ ...never touch anything they find in the park whether dangerous (needles, glass etc..) or neutral (money, jewellery, games etc...) They should tell an adult immediately.
- ⇒ ...stay away from heavily forested, lonely areas as well as abandoned garages or houses.
- ⇒ ...avoid shortcuts and only take the pre-planned route(s) that you have established with them.
- ⇒ ...never hitchhike or catch a ride with anyone. Have them carry enough cash to call a family member or friend or to take a taxi or public transit.
- ⇒ ...trust their instincts! Let them know, if something doesn’t feel right it probably is not.

**CODE WORD or PHRASE is something memorable that you establish with your child in the event that you may need to arrange for someone they do not know to give them a message or pick them up.*

***ROUTE PLANNING is taking a walk with your child, guiding them through the safest route home from school, the park, the library and other places they frequent.*

Target Hardening

Target hardening is making oneself less accessible and less attractive to criminals. Criminals are looking for easy targets - someone who can be easily identified as possessing what he or she wants.

To help reduce the risk of victimization and theft, have your son/daughter...

- ... refrain from bragging about owning expensive things.
- ... leave expensive gadgets at home or in a safe place. If they have to bring their desirable belongings such as an MP3 player, cell phone, jewelry, or iPod, encourage them not to flaunt it.

If your son/daughter is/has been victimized

- ... talk openly and reassure them that it is not their fault.
- ... be supportive and find workable strategies and a safety plan to avoid re-victimization.
- ... report it to principals and teachers if it is school-related.
- ... if comfortable, speak with the other parents and children involved.
- ... always call the police and report the incident.

Not sure if your son/daughter is being victimized? Look for these signs:

- Lost or missing property
- Withdrawn behaviour, unusual quietness and/or depression
- Lacks desire to go to school, truancy and/or failing grades

Resources

Parent Helpline 1.888.603.9100

Offers anonymous parenting/caregiver access to information, support and referrals

RCMP Website
www.rcmp-grc.ca/youth/bebrightbully_e.htm
Offers information to youth on safety and bullying

HEY Y (Hearing Every Youth Through Youth)
416.423.HEYY (4399)
www.hey.y.net

Telephone help line for youth, peer support, information and referrals

Straight Talk Youth Counselling Toronto
416.709.8652
www.straight-talk.com

Offers counselling for youth 13-24 years

Toronto Police Non-Emergency #
416.808.2222

Attends to non-emergency situations of concern to the police

CPAT is a non-profit organization mandated to educate and mobilize communities through crime prevention initiatives.

For more information or to make a donation, contact our office.



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Talking to your kids about Street Safety



Let's talk "Streetproofing"

Streetproofing is one of the most important measures you can take to help keep your children safe.



(formerly Crime Concern)