

Personal safety for children

One of the most important things parents or guardians can do is to teach a child how to keep safe. Every parent worries about their children's safety but it's important to remember that most dangers can be minimised with proper awareness and suitable guidelines. It is especially important that children learn about personal safety.

Awareness needn't make children anxious

A lot of people believe that teaching young children about personal safety will frighten them. We believe this is wrong – there is no need to frighten children whilst simply teaching them to take the safest action in any situation. On the contrary, you will give the child the extra confidence of learning someone new and valuable to them.

The next time you are out with your children try asking them “What if...?” questions, such as “What should you do if you got lost?”; “What should you do if mummy doesn't arrive to collect you from school?” and then talk through the answers together.

Tips for teaching safety awareness to children

The following tips will give you a framework on which to base your advice as the child gets older.

- Discuss with them where they could go for help if they were lost or felt threatened – agree with them where they should go, perhaps a shop, garage or library.
- Discuss with them the type of person they can approach for help if they are ever scared, threatened or lost. Identifying ‘safe’ people with your children will give them guidance on who to approach. Remember that it is not always strangers that pose a threat.
- Teach them how to make an emergency call and make sure they always carry change or a phonecard in a secret pocket.
- Ensure they know their address and telephone number at the earliest possible age. Encourage them to tell you if anyone they know makes them feel strange or uncomfortable for whatever reason.
- Let them know that they should never accept a lift from anyone - even if they know them – if it has not previously been arranged with their parent or guardian.