

WHAT IF MY CHILD TELLS ME THAT HE/SHE HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED?



- Do not ignore or dismiss what he or she says.
- Respond calmly to the information.
- Allow your child to take his or her own time to tell you what happened, in their own words.
- Do not ask for details about the abuse: professionals will do that later.
- Once your child has shared, do not keep asking for more information. Respect the child's feelings.
- Reassure your child that it was not his or her fault.
- Tell your child that it was right for him or her to tell you about the abuse.
- Do not confront the person who abuses. This will alert him/her to the allegations, and may also compromise subsequent investigations and evidence gathered by professionals.
- Do not keep it secret. Your child may need support and services to help him/her recover from the abuse. Also, the person who abuses needs to be stopped from abusing your child or any other child again.

To report possible child sexual abuse of your child or any other child, call Child Protective Service at 1800-777-0000 or the police.

DO SEEK HELP EARLY

HELP LINES

ComCare Call 1800 222 0000

Family Violence Specialist Centres

PAVE

6555 0390

<http://www.pave.org.sg/>

TRANS SAFE Centre

6449 9088

<http://www.transfamilyservices.org.sg/services-safe.html>

Care Corner Project StART

6476 1482

<http://www.carecorner.org.sg/start.html>

Child Protection Specialist Centres

Big Love

6445 0400

[http://www.biglove.org.sg/
contact@biglove.org.sg](http://www.biglove.org.sg/contact@biglove.org.sg)

HEART@Fei Yue

6819 9170

<http://www.fycs.org/index.cfm?GPID=260>
heartadmin@fycs.org

You can also find more information at
<http://www.stopfamilyviolence.sg> and
[http://app.msf.gov.sg/dfcs/familyservice/
default.aspx](http://app.msf.gov.sg/dfcs/familyservice/default.aspx)



FAMILY VIOLENCE DESTROYS LIVES

SEEK HELP EARLY



Stop Child Sexual Abuse

If you are, or someone you know is experiencing family violence, call ComCare Call at 1800 222 0000

Visit www.stopfamilyviolence.sg

HOW DO I KEEP MY CHILD SAFE FROM SEXUAL ABUSE?



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS A CRIME

- Child sexual abuse means any act where a child (below the age of 14) or a young person (from 14 years to below 16 years of age) is used for sexual pleasure, or is taken advantage of in a sexual way. It includes showing a child or young person (CYP) sexual acts or pornography.
- Deception, threats, bribes or physical force are used to make a CYP take part in the sexual activity and to keep silent about it.
- Sexual abuse remains sexual abuse even if the CYP agrees to what is happening or is aware of what is happening.
- Sexual abuse can happen to boys and girls at any age.
- Children of all levels of ability can be abused.
- Child sexual abuse can occur in families from any socio economic status or background.
- Child abuse can be committed by anyone, but it is more likely that the person who abuses is a member of the CYP's family or is someone the CYP trusts. This can include a neighbour, a family friend, or a teacher/tutor.
- The person who abuses can be male or female.
- The person who abuses may be the same age, older or just bigger than the CYP.

WHY IS PREVENTION IMPORTANT?

- Child sexual abuse can result in physical, psychological and emotional harm to the CYP.
- Parents and caregivers cannot be there all the time to protect their children; it is important to teach children how to keep themselves safe and to know what to do if they are abused.
- You may feel awkward, embarrassed or unsure how to talk to your child about protecting themselves from sexual abuse. You may try to include it when talking to your child about safety in general such as road safety, or how to be safe around water. By reassuring them of their right to be safe and providing them with information on avenues for help, you help your child feel safe reporting instances of sexual abuse.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT SOMETHING MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO MY CHILD?

- Every child is different and may show different behaviours, but you may observe that something has changed in your child.
- **Physical:** Your child may have injuries or bruises to the private parts or on the inner thighs or arms. This could be a result of having been restrained or diagnosed with (sexually transmitted) infections/diseases.
- **Emotional:** Your child may become withdrawn, clingy, or display outbursts of anger.
- **Behavioural:** Your child may start to have nightmares, sleeping difficulties, or show sexual behaviour and/or knowledge that is not appropriate at his/her age. Your child may also have sexual contact with other children or adults or avoid being with someone whom he/she was previously close to for no apparent reason.
- It is important to note that some children may not show any change in behaviour at all. So it is important to take a proactive approach and teach your child about personal safety. It is also important for parents and caregivers to encourage their children to share about their daily activities, as a way of promoting open communication.

GROOMING

- “Grooming” is how a person who abuses attempts to get close to your child to gain confidence and trust, to set the stage for the abuse to happen without raising any alerts.
- The person who abuses may start off by being physically close to your child, using play or massaging as an activity to touch the child, and increasingly moving to sexual touching.
- The person who abuses may also tell your child that it is “ok” for such physical touching to happen, or tell your child that it is “normal” or “part of sex education”.

HOW DO I TEACH MY CHILD ABOUT PROTECTING HIM/HERSELF FROM SEXUAL ABUSE?

1. **Teach your child about appropriate touching.** Children need to be able to identify when, where, and how people can touch them.
2. **Teach your child when to say “No”.** Children need to know that they can say “No”, even to a family member or an authority figure.
3. **Teach your child to trust his or her own feelings.** Children can tell when something is not right.
4. **Teach your child that he or she owns his or her own body.** Just as children learn that their books and toys belong to them, teach them that their bodies belong to them.
5. **Teach your child to leave a situation where they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.**
6. **Teach your child that secrets can be harmful.** Abusive persons often tell children that what is happening or has happened is a secret and that the child must not tell anyone, even their parents, about it.
7. **Teach your child who he or she can talk to.** Children should be taught who they can talk to if they feel unsafe or are hurt, including parents, extended family members, teachers and doctors.
8. **Maintain an open line of communication with your child.** This will help reinforce to your child that you are interested in his/her well-being and would empower your child to seek support from you.

