Teaching children about strangers

Young children often think that "strangers" are people they've never seen before. They also think that strangers are mean or unfriendly. But the truth is, young children know many of the people who hurt them. Even if this is not the case, these people usually act kind and friendly to try to get children to trust them.

Tell children that a stranger is anyone they don’t know well. Strangers include the clerk they see each week at the grocery store, the paperboy who comes daily, or the friendly person on the playground. A stranger can be male or female, young or old. Children shouldn’t think that all strangers are just one sex, race, or age. Teach children to follow safety rules with strangers and relatives.

Staying safe away from home

Girls aged 8 to 11 are the children who are most likely to be molested. But the number of boy victims is also going up.

Children who have no adults taking care of them should walk or play with friends whenever they can. They should try to stay in places with lots of people, and they should avoid dark or out-of-the-way places.

If strangers try to talk to them, children should keep walking without speaking. Then they should tell an adult right away.

If someone is following them, children should go to a public place or friend's house right away for help. They should not go home if no one is there. They should not go to a deserted area. If someone tries to touch or grab them, children should scream, "Help!" and try to run away and get help from an adult.
Arriving home when no one is there

Children should check windows and doors to see if anyone has tried to break in. If things look okay, they can go in and lock the door. (Remind them to take the key out of the lock after opening the door.) But if anything seems strange or if they think that someone is in the house, they should not go in. Instead, they should rush to a neighbor’s house or another safe place you have agreed on. Then they can call the police.

Leave an extra key with a neighbor or in a secret place. Children can use it if they lose their key or get locked out. Never hide keys outside. If your children can find it, so can someone else.