

## “5 Tips for Preventing Child Sexual Abuse”

*by Jim Burns, Ph.D.*

Every day in this country, children are being tricked, seduced, intimidated and forced into sexual activity with another person. Whatever state you live in, I guarantee there are thousands of children in the social services system. They’re not the criminals, mind you—they are the victims—kids who have been abused.

I believe that like many other things, when it comes to sexual abuse, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So, what can parents do to prevent child sexual abuse? Allow me to share with you five tips I believe can help you address the issue—and with God’s help—keep your kids from becoming another statistic.

**1. Learn as much information as you can about physical and sexual abuse.** Learn who is most likely to commit crimes of abuse, why adults abuse kids, etc. There are lots of Internet websites that have preventative information about child sexual abuse. A simple search will turn up many of these resources.

**2. Listen and talk with your children.** Good communication is the most important principle in keeping your kids safe from sexual abuse. Work to create a climate in your home where kids aren’t afraid to share information about things they may be embarrassed or afraid about. Be willing to share with your kids about what you know about sexual abuse and how to prevent it. For instance, be sure to share with your kids basic information like, “no one has the right to touch your body without your permission.”

**3) Teach your kids personal safety rules.** Start early with your children (in an age appropriate way) and set clear safety rules for your kids. Here is a list of safety rules to help you get started:

- The proper names for all their private parts; many children are not able to tell about the abuse because they don’t know the words to use.
- Safety rules apply to all adults; not just strangers.
- Their bodies belong to them and it is not okay for another person to touch their private parts.
- It is okay to say no if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable; no matter who the person is
- They should not keep secrets about touching, no matter what he person says; if someone touches them, tell and keep telling until someone listens!

**4. Know the adults and teens in your children’s lives.** From getting to know school teachers, coaches and youth workers to interviewing potential baby sitters, you should

know as much as you can about the adults and teens your kids spend time with. Any adult that seems more interested in your children than you do, should raise a cautionary flag in your mind.

**5. Keep tabs on your kids.** As much as possible, know where your kids are at and whom they are with. Make it a family rule that if your children's plans change, they must notify you before they do something or go somewhere that you don't know about.