

Talking to your child about possible daycare abuse can be stressful for both you and your child. Your child may or may not know acceptable and unacceptable behavior from both their peers and caregivers. And the uncertainty of the situation can add an emotional component which may not be conducive to talking with your child. The guidelines below are recommended steps in talking with your child about abuse.

Proactive Steps

It's important for your child to know what actions are permissible and what actions are unacceptable. Children can be taught some basic lessons such as:

- * Say NO to anyone who asks you to do something painful, embarrassing or wrong
- * NO ONE should touch you on the parts of the body covered by a swimsuit, nor should you touch anyone else in these private places
- * If someone tells you to keep something secret, it's still okay to tell Mom and Dad (or other family). No matter what the secret is, it will be okay, no matter a threat or bribe.
- * Don't be alone with someone in a isolated place, like a bathroom or bedroom.
- * If something happens that makes you feel weird or strange, you should always tell Mom and Dad (or other family member).

Day-to-Day Updates

It's important to talk with your child about what happened in their day, from their social interactions with others to learning opportunities. If the child isn't particularly verbal, role-playing and acting out a situation may be more appropriate. These conversations will give parents an opportunity to see how comfortable the child is with adults and peers at daycare.

It's also important to maintain a comfortable and open atmosphere with the child. Children may have developed fear or intimidation when speaking with adults, especially if threats, bribes, or misinformation has been communicated to them by an abuser.

Talking about Abuse

The suspicion of abuse may be confirmed simply by talking with your child about the experiences of daycare. A few tips to ease into the conversation:

- * Don't just ask once, and don't accept a yes/no answer. By keeping the conversation open, a parent can carefully pull additional information out of the child in a comfortable, non-threatening environment
- * It's okay to keep asking about experiences, and it's okay to draw these experiences out of a child. Be specific in your questions, and watch their reactions to the story.
- * Talk about experiences generally, and try to define the boundaries of the abuse - is it just happening with your child? Is it provoked by a specific situation? How long has the abuse been going on? Does your child understand it's not their fault?
- * Pay attention to the answers, and don't rush to emotion. This is extraordinarily difficult, but staying calm through the child's story is imperative.
- * Respect the child's reactions to the experiences, and don't recoil or "clam up" when listening or watching your child.

