

Sexual safety

A few further notes. We cannot predict every situation our child may come up against. What we are aiming for are some safety habits, and some ways of thinking which help preserve sexual health and personal safety. As children grow into teenagers, get involved in discussions, such as:

I am responsible for my own sexual health.

Don't give out information that can lead a potential offender to your person.

Try to stay out of situations where you will lose control, or that you cannot escape from.

Scan for danger signs: no way out; a sense that you are going to be forced into an activity that you don't want.

Try to avoid actions that put you in harm's way: being alone in an isolated spot; getting in a car with someone you don't know; agreeing to take an unknown drug.

If you use your sexual attractiveness to gain attention, or tease others by letting them expect you will have sex with them, you may be heading for a situation where another person feels they have a right to have sex with you. Don't give out sexual messages by your behaviour that you aren't ready to follow up on.

Putting personal information on the internet, or via text on mobile phones, is actually making that information public. You lose control over who sees it, who spreads it around, and who might respond to it.

Before you blog, or text, or put information on the net, think about what you want all the people in the world to know about you. Would you want any of them to act on the information you post? Would you want them to be able to contact you directly?

If a child or teen is going to engage in risky behaviour

If the young person intends to go ahead with risky behaviour, and you have the chance to talk with them, I suggest:

- See if you can find a face-saving way to divert them to some other activity.
If not, then:
- Name the behaviour and tell them again why it is a risk.
- Tell them what you think the result or consequences of this behaviour are likely to be.
- Tell them what you are going to do if they go ahead with it.
- Then, if they do go ahead—follow up on what you said you would do.
- Help them pick up the pieces, but don't protect them from the consequences.