# **Tips for Teaching Children Good Touch and Bad Touch**

**Source**: [www.utmb.edu](http://www.utmb.edu)

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Touch plays an important role in a child’s life. Hugs can express love and security, while high fives can be a sign of good work or positive accomplishment. These are examples of good touch, or a touch that makes a child feel cared for, supported and safe.

While we would like to believe the best in everyone and hope that we live in a world with only good touch, it is important to know that children can be exposed to bad touch. Bad touch is any touch that makes a child feel uncomfortable, afraid or nervous. Examples include hitting or inappropriate touching of a child’s body.

Abuse, and in particular sexual abuse, is a difficult topic to discuss. It may seem complicated to discuss this with children, and easier to pretend that it does not exist. However, it is estimated that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys experience sexual abuse by the age 18.1 Parents have an unique opportunity to educate children about their child’s body and equip them with tools that they can use if placed in an uncomfortable situation.

We have compiled a list of tips and discussion topics to help you start this conversation with you child.

1. Teach children the anatomical names of body parts
   * Anatomical names of body parts can be taught while teaching the names of other body parts, such as head, arms, and legs. Teaching children the anatomical names of private parts equips them with the vocabulary to communicate about their body.
2. Teach children about body privacy
   * After teaching children the names of their body parts, it is important to teach them that some areas of their body should not be touched, photographed or shown to other people. An example that is easy for children to understand is the swimsuit rule. Swimsuit Rule: private body parts are those covered by a swimsuit. It is also important to teach children the exception to the swimsuit rule, such as when parents need to change a baby’s diaper or when a child goes to the doctor’s office for a check-up.
3. Start conversations at an early age
   * Talk with children about their bodies during everyday activities, such as bath time or going to the pool. This will help create an environment where a child feels comfortable talking about their body with their parent.
4. Encourage open communication
   * Creating a safe and open environment is another aspect of helping a child discuss his or her body. Often times, sexual predators will bribe children or discourage them from sharing information. It is important to let you child know that he or she does not need to keep secrets from you.
5. Discuss more than stranger danger
   * We often teach our children about strangers and the danger of getting in a vehicle or talking with someone they do not know, however, 90% of sexual abuse cases are committed by someone the child knows.2 Be mindful of instances that your child may be one on one with another adult, such as a team coach or troop leader. Try to avoid situations where your child may be alone with an adult in a private setting.
6. Teach children what to do if someone tries to use bad touch
   * Teach your child to say no and to yell for help. Encourage your child to run to a trusted adult. If at a friend’s house or away from home, the child can call his or her parent to pick them up immediately.
7. Teach children who they can approach if they are in an uncomfortable situation or are inappropriately touched
   * It is important to talk with your children about who they can go to if they feel uncomfortable. This should become second nature to them, just like dialing 911 if there is an emergency. Children can go to their parent, teacher, doctor, or police officer if they feel unsafe.