THE UNDERWEAR RULE

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Talking about sexual abuse with your child doesn't have to be scary. In fact, you don't even have to mention 'sexual abuse'. Simple conversations can help keep your child safe.

The Underwear Rule is a way to help keep children safe from abuse. It teaches children that their body belongs to them, they have a right to say no, and that they should tell an adult if they're upset or worried.

We've created an easy-to-remember guide – Talk PANTS – that helps children understand the key points of the Underwear Rule.

Don't feel you have to go through all of these point by point – it's much better to have little conversations, as and when the subject comes up. You can always use The Underwear Rule: A guide for children, when you're having those conversations.

TALK PANTS AND YOU'VE GOT IT COVERED!

P RIVATES ARE PRIVATE

A LWAYS REMEMBER YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU

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S PEAK UP, SOMEONE CAN HELP

ChildLine

NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

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PRIVATES ARE PRIVATE

Anything covered by underwear is private. No one should ask to see or touch parts of the body covered by underwear. No one should ask your child to touch or look at parts of their body covered by underwear. If anyone tries, your child should say no.

In some situations, people – such as family members at bathtime, doctors or nurses – may need to touch your child's private parts. Explain to your child that this is OK, but that those people should always explain why, and ask if it's OK first.

ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU

Your child should know their body belongs to them, and no one else. No one has the right to make your child do anything with their body that makes them feel uncomfortable. And if anyone tries, your child should tell a trusted adult.

NO MEANS NO

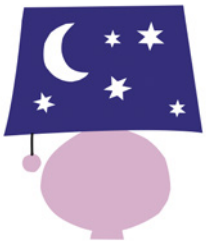
Your child has the right to say 'no' – even to a family member or someone they love. This shows your child they're in control of their body and their feelings are respected.

There are times when you may need to overrule your child's preferences to keep them safe – like when you're crossing the road – but it helps if you explain the difference. If a child feels empowered to say no to their own family, they are more likely to say no to others.

After school
If your child has learned about relationships or personal safety, ask what they remember – it will give you a starting point from which to begin more detailed conversations.

Talking over the TV
TV can be a great way of opening up tricky topics. Though we might sometimes wish our children hadn't heard something in the news or on a soap, it's best to address the point head on rather than dismiss it, or pretend it hasn't happened.

The bedtime routine
When you're getting your child ready for bed – or helping them tie their shoelaces or get dressed – you could talk about times when a trusted adult might need to touch them.



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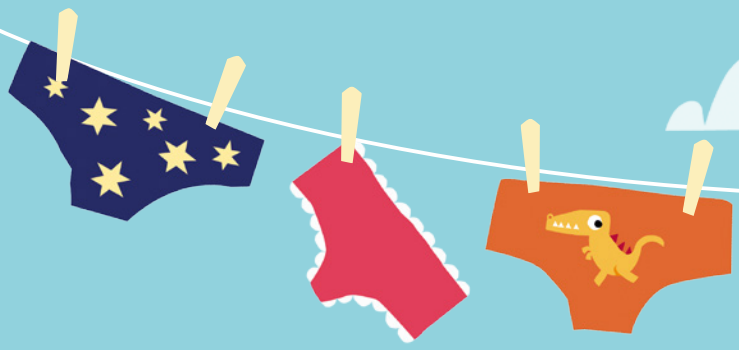

TALK ABOUT SECRETS THAT UPSET YOU

Help your child feel confident that speaking up about a secret that's worrying them won't get them into trouble. Explain the difference between 'good' and 'bad' secrets.

Some secrets, like surprise parties, can be good. But adults should never make a child keep a secret that makes them feel worried, sad or frightened. Secrets are often an abuser's greatest weapon. Phrases like "it's our little secret" are their way of making a child feel worried, or scared to tell.

Help your child to feel clear and confident about what to share and when. Secrets shouldn't be kept in exchange for something, and should never make your child feel uneasy. A secret should always be shared in the end.

SPEAK UP, SOMEONE CAN HELP

If your child feels sad, anxious or frightened they can talk to an adult they trust. This person will listen, and can help stop whatever's making them upset. Remind your child that whatever the problem, it's not their fault and they won't get into trouble.

A trusted adult doesn't have to be a family member. It can be a teacher, an older brother or sister or a friend's parent. It can even be ChildLine.

Driving home
Car journeys are a great time to talk to your child. They're in a comfortable setting, with limited distractions. If you're on your way to school, you could ask about who they would tell at school if something was upsetting them.

Question time
Don't shy away from your child's difficult questions. Reward their curiosity by speaking to your child honestly. Talking frankly will make the subject less shocking, and you'll show yourself to be someone they can confide in.

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