

Power of Parents



Child Safety Handbook





Child Safety Handbook

Safety Tips & Technology Tools for Today's Family

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, more than 2,000 children are reported missing every day and, thankfully, the vast majority of them are recovered quickly. For more than two decades, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) has been on the frontline of helping to keep our children safer. NCMEC's partnership with Duracell, through the Power of Parents program, is dedicated to providing parents and guardians with the practical knowledge necessary to help protect their children. The program provides information about the most common safety myths and reminds families of the importance of regularly reinforcing the conversations they have with their children regarding their safety.

As a child grows, age and social development create new experiences that they need help to fully understand. Whether it is walking home from school for the first time, going to the park with friends, or using the Internet, a child's ability to understand safety skills is constantly evolving and their parents' and guardians' approach to teaching those skills should change with them.

Understanding that parents and guardians need to be the first line of defense for safety education, Duracell and NCMEC have created the Child Safety Handbook based on NCMEC's nearly 25 years of experience and expertise. This handbook can be part of a family's complete safety program and will help parents and guardians understand basic safety tips that will help their children stay safer at each stage of their lives. The handbook also provides a sampling of some of the most current and available technologies that parents and guardians can use to help safeguard their children.



Infant – Toddler

Infants and toddlers need constant supervision since they do not have the judgment or experience to make safety decisions independently or to protect themselves. You should make sure your young children have appropriate adult supervision at all times and regularly check on them when they are in someone else's care.

Child Safety Tips:

- Only allow persons you know well to hold your baby. Be extremely cautious of anyone who demonstrates a great deal of attention to your baby or wants contact with your child alone.
- Report individuals who behave suspiciously toward you or your child in a public setting to the appropriate authorities.
- Use caution in creating Web sites for your new baby or posting photographs of your child online. Let caregivers know that you prefer photos not be taken of the baby or child but that you are happy to share some of your many great pictures of the baby.
- Basic safety information can begin to be taught when your child is able to speak and put words together. Children should be taught their name and parent's or guardian's name. Teach them not to wander away and to ask for help from a store clerk if they get separated from you.
- Be sure to screen babysitters and caregivers. Many states have a public registry that lists individuals with prior sex offenses. Check out references with other families who have used the caregiver or babysitter. Once you have chosen the caregiver, drop in unexpectedly to see how your child is doing.
- If your child is in a childcare facility, find out who supervises them in the restrooms and during naptime. Find out what other adults will have access to your child while he or she is in the facility. It is important to know the policy



for assistance and supervision when your child's diaper requires a change, needs to be dressed, or is getting potty training and will be using the restrooms.

Technology Tools:

- Wireless and video technological advancements can help you keep an eye on your children without being in the same room. The latest baby monitors utilize infrared LEDs to provide hi-resolution images even in the darkness and can be hooked up to a TV for viewing.
- Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology is being used to protect against infant abductions and to help hospitals ensure mothers are matched with their babies during their stay. Tags are usually placed on infants' ankles. From 1983 to 2008¹ there have been 254 newborn/infant abductions; 123 of which have been from healthcare facilities (117 have been located) There have been only 12 documented cases of healthcare facility abductions in which the infant was wearing a facility installed security tag.

Ages 4 – 6

Children, ages four to six, are just beginning to understand their personal safety and this is a great time to talk through tips and language they can use. For decades, children were taught to stay away from strangers. This concept is difficult for children to grasp and, generally, abductors and those who victimize children are known to the child.

The overwhelming majority of abducted children are taken by someone they know; even among non-family abductions more than 46 percent of the children know their abductors². It is better to help build your child's confidence and teach them how to respond to a potentially dangerous situation than trying to have them learn what type of person may cause them harm.

Child Safety Tips:

- Children as young as four or five years old can be taught their address and telephone number and how to use a telephone. Teach them to check first with you before they go anywhere, accept anything, or get into a car with anyone.
- Children should always take a friend with them when they go places or play outside. Younger children should remain in an adult's view at all times.
- Teach your children it's okay to say no if someone tries to touch them or treats them in a way that makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. They should yell and draw attention to themselves to help them get out of the situation as quickly as possible.
- Children need to know that they can tell you or a trusted adult if they feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused, that there will always be someone there to help them, and they have the right to be safe.
- Be sensitive to any changes in your child's behavior or attitude. Be an active listener. Look and listen to small cues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings.



- Practice what you teach. Find opportunities to practice "what if" scenarios and allow your children to practice safety skills. You may think your children understand your message, but until they see it in action, they might not be able to use it themselves.

Technology Tools:

- Child locator devices with GPS are a popular tool being utilized by parents and guardians in an effort to help keep their children safer. The GPS (Global Positioning System) technology has increased the ability of parents and guardians to keep track of their children. These devices range from simple audio units that will emit a high volume beep until the child is found, to cell phones, watches, shoes, coats, and backpacks installed with GPS technology that can track children in real time. Many of these devices have advanced features such as pre-programmable buttons that allow the child to keep in touch with their parents or guardian or call 9-1-1 if necessary, as well as automatic activation if the child moves too far away or if an attempt is made to forcibly remove the device.
- Age-appropriate introductory safety software is available that utilizes songs, video games, and animated characters to enhance children's safety skills along with language and early math skills. The safety software is also an opportunity to introduce a child to the family computer.

Ages 7 – 11

At this age, your child will begin to become more social, valuing the opinions of their friends. Children also show a desire for more independence from their family. By age 10, children enjoy belonging to organized groups and may not be under as much adult supervision. They are also starting to walk to and from school activities. According to NCMEC, 45 percent of attempted abductions that occur when school is in session occur when the child is walking or riding a bicycle to or from school or a school-related activity.

Additionally, early in this age range is when children typically start to enhance reading skills, and are capable of using computers and the Internet independent of adult supervision.

Child Safety Tips:

- Use the back-to-school timeframe to talk to your children again about child safety. The start of a new school year brings added privileges and responsibilities for your children. Make sure they know how to handle situations like adults offering them a ride home.
- Notice when someone shows one or all of your children a great deal of attention or begins giving them gifts. Take the time to talk to your children about the person and also find out why the person is acting in this way.
- Be involved in your children's activities. You'll have a better opportunity to observe how the adults in charge interact with your children. If you are concerned with anyone's behavior, take it up with the sponsoring organization.
- Listen to your children. Pay attention if they tell you that they don't want to be with someone or go somewhere. This may be an indication of more than a personality conflict or lack of interest in the activity or event.



- Make sure you have “safety nets” in place, so that you and your children know there is always someone who can help them. This may include other trusted adults like extended family, friends, or teachers that you and your children may rely on if you are not available.
- Remember that there is no substitute for your attention and supervision. Being available and taking time to really know and listen to your children helps build feelings of safety and security.

Technology Tools:

- Content-filtering and parental control software products are geared towards helping families stay safer online and can be installed on your computer to review and limit the content and online activity of your child. The software can regulate and limit time spent online, chat capabilities, online gaming, file sharing, and it can also block content deemed inappropriate to your child. You have the ability to customize the settings and restrictions for each child, selecting and restricting functions and content available to the user.
- New cell phones offer parents and guardians a unique way to keep track of their children. Features in certain phones include: programmable speed dial buttons that allow parents and guardians to restrict what numbers the phone can call; tracking technology that allows them to see where their child is; notification via text message when the child leaves a certain range; and parental controls on incoming calls.

Ages 12–17

Relationships with friends become more important to your children at this age and they can be highly influenced by what their friends are doing, both in offline and online activities.

They will be using the Internet to help with school work, download music, e-mail others and interact on social networking sites. They communicate with friends by instant messaging and text messaging by cell phone.

Children in this age range are at equal and sometimes greater risk for victimization compared to younger children. They may appear very self confident and have more freedom, but they may engage in risky behavior because they don't understand the consequences. More children and teens are online than ever before, exposing them to potential risks and dangers.

They are susceptible to everything from promises of fame to great tickets to a concert. Older children need to understand that fame and fortune don't come that easily, and if something seems too good to be true, it usually is.

Safety Tips:

- Continue to keep the lines of communications open with your children, set guidelines, know who his or her friends are and supervise all activities. Make sure your children understand and continue to practice important safety rules.
- Talk to your children about the importance of not accepting anything from anyone without your knowledge and to tell you if an adult makes overtures or promises to them.
- Be sensitive to any changes in your children's behavior or attitude. Look and listen to small cues and clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings. Listen compassionately to their concerns and work with them to get the help they need to resolve the problem.
- Monitor Internet usage and set guidelines for the time of day, length of time, people they may communicate with, and appropriate areas for them to visit while online. Kids should use webcams or post photos online only with your knowledge and supervision. Teens whose parents or



guardians have talked to them "a lot" about online safety are less likely to consider meeting face to face with someone they met on the Internet (12 percent vs. 20 percent)²

- Monitor other points of Internet access including your child's cell phone, iPhone, PDAs. Keep your child's computer in an open area of your home. Teens whose parents have talked to them "a lot" about Internet safety are more concerned about the risks of sharing personal info online than teens whose parents are less involved. For instance, 65 percent of those whose parents have not talked to them about online safety post info about where they live, compared to 48 percent of teens with more involved parents³.

Technology Tools:

- Several software programs allow you to monitor your child's online activity by viewing chat conversations and having websites they visited and other online actions e-mailed to you. Studies show that 60 percent of teens say they will usually respond when they receive online messages from someone they don't know. Nearly a third of teens (31 percent) say they usually reply to and chat with people they don't know, and only 21 percent tell a trusted adult when they receive such messages³.
- Texting is available on most digital mobile phones and can provide parents, guardians and teens a quick and easy way to relay a change in location, who is picking them up from the mall or sports practice, if one or the other is running late, critical time sensitive information such as being lost or locked out of a car or house, personal safety reminders, and confirming details that can help keep the children safer.

Footnotes

¹ These statistics include all U.S. cases documented by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the International Association for Healthcare Security & Safety (IAHSS) and the FBI National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime concerning Abductions by Non-family Members from healthcare facilities, homes and “other places” of Newborns/Infants (birth to 6 months.)

² This statistic includes all non-family abduction cases intaked at NCMEC within the past two years. In many of these cases, the relationship of the abductor to the child was never reported to NCMEC; therefore it is likely that far more than 46 percent of the children knew their abductors - the data was simply not recorded.

³ Teen Internet Study, NCMEC and Cox Communications, March 2007

