



# PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

MAY 2009

## General Safety Tips for Parents and Guardians

Tips recommended by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2009).

**P**lease take the time to discuss these important tips with your children.

### Make sure you know where your children are at all times.

Know your children's friends and have their phone numbers available. Make sure your child knows which places and homes they are allowed and not allowed to visit. Make it a rule that your child checks in with you when they arrive at a place and before they leave to come home or anytime there is a change in plans.

### Never leave children in an unattended vehicle. It does not matter if the car is running or not. Children should not be left alone in a car.

Remind children to never hitchhike, accept rides from strangers, or approach the vehicle of a stranger to answer questions or engage in conversation. Children should never go with anyone without first receiving permission from you to do so or

## WALLY CAT UPDATE

**Hello Wild Cub and Wild Cat Parents,**

*As always, I would like to thank all of my Wild Cat and Wild Cub parents that allow their children to keep sending me emails.*

*Now that the weather is getting warmer, many of you will allow your children to play outside, walk to school, ride their bikes or skateboard in their neighborhood or walk to a friend's house. Wally Cat wants your child to be a safe "Street Smart" kid!*

*Wally Cat* 

hearing a family code word (a word that only you and your child knows). If someone is sent to pick your child up, they must know the code word or your child should not go with them.

### Be an active participant in your child's activities.

By being an active participant in your children's activities you can observe how adults who are in charge of your children interact with them. If you are

concerned about anyone's behavior, express your concern to the sponsoring organization.

### Make sure your children are aware of "Safe Spots" where they can always stop for help.

Safe spots are places that a child can stop in the event they need help. Safe spots can be the houses of friends

Continued on the back 

## CONTINUED: SAFETY TIPS

they know, stores, restaurants, the police station, library, or the fire station. Take the time to quiz them on potential safe spots that they can go in the event they ever have to seek help.

### Listen to your child.

Pay close attention to your child if they share with you that they don't want to be around someone or go somewhere. Also pay attention to your child's body language around certain people. Your child's avoidance of a person could be more than a personality conflict or simply not getting along with someone.

### Too much attention from any one person may be cause for concern.

Take note when someone shows one or all of your children too much attention or begins to give them gifts. Take the time to talk with your children and inquire why the person may be acting that way.

### Teach your children that they have the right to say NO!

We often tell our children to beware of strangers, but data reveals that most children are not kidnapped by strangers, but by someone they know. Teach your children to say NO to anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable or confused. Tell them to get out of the situation as fast as possible. Reassure your children that it is OK to tell you anything.

### Be sensitive to any changes in your child's behavior or attitude.

Encourage your children to talk with you. Children don't always feel comfortable talking about disturbing feelings or events. They may also be concerned about how you may react if they confide in you. If your child brings a problem to your attention, try to remain calm and nonjudgmental. Reassure them that in talking with you, they did the right thing.

### Screen all child sitters and caregivers.

Many states now have a public registry that allows parents and guardians to check out individuals for prior criminal records and sex offenses. Be sure to check the person's references with other families that have used the person before. Never hesitate to drop in unexpectedly to see how your children are doing and how the caregiver is handling them. Ask your children how they like the caregiver and listen carefully to their responses.

### Have practice sessions with your children.

Practice basic safety tips by going to the mall or park with your child and having them use a pay telephone, go to the restroom with a friend, or locate an adult who may be able to help them if they need assistance. Make sure your child always lets you know where they are going.

## ACTIVITY

Which one of these people is a stranger?



Answer: All of them. Just because a person looks "normal" or "safe" does not mean you should trust them. They are still a stranger! A stranger is someone you do not know!

[http://pediatrics.about.com/od/parentingquizzes//bl\\_strngdngr.htm](http://pediatrics.about.com/od/parentingquizzes//bl_strngdngr.htm)

### Personalized clothing items are not recommended.

Remember, personalized clothing items may give someone your child's name and an opportunity to strike up an unwanted conversation with your child.

### You know your child better than anyone.

There is no substitute for the attention and supervision your child will receive from you. The more time you spend with your children, the more you talk with them and listen, the stronger the bond between you and your child will grow.

#### SOURCES:

<http://www.missingkids.com>  
<http://www.mychildsafety.net>  
<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/keeping-kids-safe?print=true>  
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/psfceng.pdf>  
<http://kpspsor.state.ky.us/sor/html/SORSearch.htm>

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[www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL/Bulletins](http://www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL/Bulletins)

