

How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy



A Series by Sikh Family Center



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #1

Teach them proper body part names.



All body parts serve necessary functions - there is **no shame** in speaking about any of them, including genitalia.

Using code words ("pee pee", "wee wee" etc.) can create a **sense of secrecy** around private body parts, which may make a child less likely to disclose abuse.

Not naming private parts (bottom, vagina, penis, breasts) may also lead to **confusion or misunderstandings** when a child is trying to share or ask about something.



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #2

Teach them about safe touch.



Safe touch examples include a hug from someone your child trusts, a bath from a parent, an examination by a doctor with consent of their parent/guardian.

Unsafe touch is anything that makes them **uncomfortable, scared, or confused** - even if from someone the child trusts.

Remind them to **tell you immediately** about any unsafe touch.



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #3

Teach them that they can say no.



When someone your child knows asks them for a hug, let them know **they don't have to give one**, and can give a high five, wave, or say Sat Sri Akal with folded hands.

Similarly, teach them to **ask** before giving a friend a hug, and to respect their friend's response if they say no.

Let them know that any harm or unsafe touch is **never their fault**.



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #4

Teach them
that abuse
is never
their fault.



A child may think **they did something** to cause abuse. Let them know they are not to blame for being hurt or touched inappropriately.

Children should also be told that they will never **get in trouble** for telling someone about abuse.



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #5

Teach them
to never
keep secrets
from you.



"Secrets", especially about something the child considers embarrassing such as inappropriate touch, can be **very harmful**.

Instruct children to always **tell you or a trusted adult** if someone asks them to keep a "secret." Even if that someone is a "respected" adult, and whether they seem "friendly" or "scary."

Avoid using the word "secret" as far as possible in everyday life, and **use "surprise" instead** for gifts or fun special occasions.



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #6

Help them
think of
five adults
they can trust.



These should be people who will respond lovingly when your child shares any concerns, and should include both **family and non-family members**.

Let your child know that if the adult they tell does not support or believe them, they should **tell another trusted adult**.



How to Teach Your Child Body Autonomy: Tip #7

Talk to your child early and often.



Starting from **toddler years**, children can be taught to have body autonomy through simple things like choosing which adults they want to hug.

It's also imperative to talk to your child often - a single conversation isn't enough to help them develop the **right mindset**, or to remember that they can talk to you or another agreed upon adult **without getting in trouble**.





Sikh Family Center Non-Emergency National Helpline

866.SFC.SEWA | 866.732.7392

FREE | PRIVATE | PUNJABI & ENGLISH

Trained peer counselors respond within 48 hours



24 Hour Emergency Hotlines

National Domestic Violence Hotline 800.799.7233

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network 800.656.4673

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline 988

