

# Top Five Ways for Parents to Protect Children

(Source = <http://drphil.com/shows/show/1349>)

The likelihood of a child getting abducted is one in 347,000 or .0003 percent, but if it happens to your kid, it's 100 percent. Dr. Phil counts down the five most important things you can do to keep your children safe from predators.

## 5. Prepare Your Children without Fear

You don't want to make your children paranoid, but you must prepare them. Talk about safety openly and without fear. Go over the dos and don'ts with them.

### Don'ts

- Never get in a car with a stranger.
- Never go to a second location with someone you don't know.
- Never let someone swear you to secrecy.

"The child has no decision to make, because there are clear nevers," Dr. Phil explains. "That way, they will be cautious, they will be careful to not let someone put them in harm's way."

### Dos

- Stay with a friend.
- Let parents know where you are.

You need to make sure your children understand that they are loved, and they need to love themselves.

## 4. Set Up Their World for Safety

- Never leave your children alone, even for a moment, particularly when they're young.
- Have strict procedures on such things as going to and from school and where to go after a dance or sports. If your child is a latch-key kid, make sure he or she knows the procedure you want in place for when he or she gets home from school, like keeping the doors locked.
- Your children should know their home telephone number, their parents' cell phone numbers, their home address and how to call 911.
- Children should never wear clothes displaying their name.
- Set up a code word with your child in case of emergency and test it. If you send a friend or family member to pick your child up, the child can ask him or her for the code word. Your child will know it's safe to go with the adult if they can repeat the code word.
- Create a map of your neighborhood so children know where to go if they're feeling uncomfortable. Point out safe houses, fire stations or a trusted neighbor's home. Your child should also know where to run or drive in case the situation calls for that action.

"They need to know where things are if they have to make decisions on the spur of the moment," Dr. Phil says.

### 3. Listen and Look

- As parents, you need to be extremely tuned in to what's taking place in your child's life. Listen to your children to see if they're talking about anyone who doesn't belong in their world.
- When you pick your children up from the mall or school, scan the landscape and notice if there are people lurking or located where they don't belong.
- Most abductions are not completely random. Even if it's a stranger abduction, they tend to target children for a period of time before they abduct them. Many abductees are girls and teenagers.
- Be sure to look and listen to what your child is doing while on the Internet. Know how to [monitor the computer](#). Get in game and figure out how to check for access, passwords, lockdowns and where they've been surfing. Predators will try and [groom a child](#) over the Internet and then try and set up a meeting in the real world.

### 2. Have a Plan

- Make sure you have up-to-date pictures of your child from every angle. Be sure the images are easily recognizable.
- Get your child fingerprinted. Many local police departments offer the service free of charge, so your child can be entered into a database.
- Have a list of emergency contact numbers easily accessible. The first number on your list should be 911, and the second should be for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: (800) The Lost, (800) 843-5678. The first few hours after an abduction are most critical.

### 1. Teach Your Children to Self-Protect

Teach your child to recognize danger: who, what and where.

- **Who:** Somebody they don't know or don't trust asking them to do something they don't want to do. Strangers are not only the creepy looking men in trench coats. They can be anyone. Many kids are abducted by a family friend or acquaintance.
- **What:** Adults do not ask children for help. That should be a warning sign that something is wrong. Your children should also be aware of anybody who asks them to get in a car or go somewhere with them, or anyone who crosses a boundary, such as touching them or invading their personal space.
- **Where:** If someone asks your child to go to a second location, that should set bells off in his or her head. If your child is alone and an adult approaches him or her, that is not a good sign.
- **The Buddy System:** Kids should never be alone, even for a minute. They should always be with a friend or two, because there is strength in numbers.
- **React:** Children must also know that it is OK for them to say no. They shouldn't worry about being polite. If they feel they are in danger or something is not right, they should move in the opposite direction, yell, scream and ask for help. Rehearse this with your children by asking them how they would react in certain situations. Don't tell them how to react. For example, ask them what they would do if they are at bus stop and a car pulls up offering a ride.
- **Communicate:** It's imperative that you establish a line of communication with your kids about anything they don't feel comfortable talking about.

Trust your instincts; if it feels wrong, it probably is wrong. These tips can save your child's life.