



## STRANGER DANGER AWARENESS TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN

Telling our kids not to talk to strangers is not enough anymore, and it's not realistic. Children have a difficult time understanding the concept of "stranger." If they've seen someone at their school or in their neighborhood they may not think of them as a stranger because they've seen them before. In addition, if the person doesn't look mean or scary they don't seem like a stranger. However, abductions do not necessarily happen by strangers.

We need to teach our children the basic rules of safety when they are out in the world without us.

### SAFETY TIPS:

- Be sure you know where your children are at all times and when they are supposed to return home.
- Know whom your children's friends' are, where they live and how to get in touch with them.
- Never leave a small child alone – at home or in the car – even for just a few minutes.
- Teach your children that bad people don't necessarily look mean – they often smile and act friendly. Teach your children not to be tricked – be smart!
- Discuss with your children how to identify safe adults who they can go to when they are in danger – people like police and firefighters.
- Use role-playing and "what if" scenarios so children can practice what to do and how to respond in different situations.
- Decide a secret code word to use in emergency situations. If you can't pick up your children yourself, make sure the person you send uses the code word. Your child should never go with anyone who does not know the code word.
- Give your children whistles to blow on if they feel in danger. The whistles will attract attention and may prevent a crime.
- Make sure your child knows how to reach you in an emergency.
- Also teach your children how and when to call 9-1-1.

### TEACH YOUR CHILDREN:

- To always tell you where they are going and when they will be back. They should also let you know if they go somewhere else or will be late.
- Not to walk anywhere alone – to walk with a friend.
- Not to take shortcuts through the woods, a back street or empty lot.
- To only play in safe areas, not empty buildings or other dangerous places.
- To pay attention to their surroundings and be on the lookout for suspicious people and vehicles.

- That strangers are not only people they don't know, but also people they don't know very well.
- Not to get close to people they don't know well. They should stay at least two arm's lengths away so they have room to back up or run away.
- To never talk to, provide assistance to, accept anything from or give personal information to people they don't know well.
- To never get into a car with anyone they don't know well.

#### IF IN DANGER, YOUR CHILDREN SHOULD KNOW:

- That if a person follows or grabs them, they should yell real loud. Teach them to shout, "I don't know you" or something similar, so people know they are in trouble. Tell your children it is okay for them to fight back and make as much noise as they can to get help. Practice this with your children by role playing.
- To run away and ask a safe adult for help.
- What safe places they can go to – a police or fire station, the library, a store or a friend's house.
- That if anyone touches them in their private areas, they should say "NO." Explain that they should tell you about these kinds of incidents as soon as possible.

#### IF THEY ARE HOME ALONE, YOUR CHILDREN SHOULD:

- Know how to reach you.
- Know how and when to call 9-1-1.
- Keep the door locked at all times.
- Never let anyone inside – even if they know the person – if you did not give permission in advance.
- Never open the door to anyone unless they have your permission.
- Never tell anyone on the phone they are alone.
- Not tell callers their name, phone number or address.
- Take a message, but hang up right away if they don't like what someone is saying on the phone.