



01 | The Underwear Rule | Your questions answered

THE UNDERWEAR RULE

Your questions answered

We want to support parents to have simple conversations that will help keep their child safe from abuse. But we realise some questions – from you and your child – are bound to crop up.

We hope this helps answer some of those questions. There are answers to more questions at [nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) but if there's anything else you would like to know, we'll be happy to help. Feel free to contact us on help@nspcc.org.uk or call 0808 800 5000.

Why do I need to talk to my child about the Underwear Rule?

No parent wants to think their child will be affected by sexual abuse. Sadly, it's more common than a lot of people think.

The Underwear Rule helps keep children safe by reminding them that their body belongs to them, that they have a right to say no, and they can always tell an adult if something happens.

90%
OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN WERE ABUSED BY SOMEONE THEY KNEW*

*Based on NSPCC research with 11-17 year olds: Radford et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today.



How do 'simple conversations' help keep my child safe?

It sounds incredible, but simple conversations really can help keep children safe from sexual abuse.

Children can feel anxious that talking about abuse will get them into trouble. They can feel guilty about breaking a promise – even one made to an abuser – and they can have a genuine fear that they might be blamed or, worse, not believed.

It's an unfortunate fact that secrets are often an abuser's greatest weapon. Phrases like "it's our little secret" are known to us all for this very reason.

We hope that this campaign can help you open a dialogue with your child from an early age. The more willing you are to talk openly with your child, the more confident they will feel about raising any issues with you.

I've already talked about 'stranger danger' with my child. Isn't that enough?

It's important your child knows what to do if a stranger approaches them, but that's only one part of keeping safe.

Over 90 per cent of sexually abused children were abused by someone they knew. Children need to understand that sexual abuse is not OK – even if they know the person.

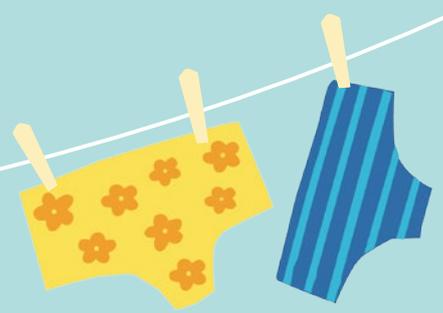
It wouldn't be right to make families feel that they couldn't trust anyone. But making sure your child knows their body is their own, and that they always have the right to say no to any unwanted touch, puts them in control. The Underwear Rule is a really effective way of reinforcing the message without feeling scary.

Take a look at [The Underwear Rule: A brief guide for parents and carers](#) and [The Underwear Rule: How to talk about keeping safe](#) for advice.

1 IN 3

CHILDREN SEXUALLY ABUSED BY AN ADULT, DID NOT TELL ANYONE ELSE AT THE TIME*

*Based on NSPCC research with 11-17 year olds: Radford et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today.



Won't talking to my child about this scare them?

We believe in safe, secure childhoods – which is why the advice we're giving is practical and reassuring. We don't want to upset or scare families and we definitely don't want to make children feel they can't accept a hug or a kiss from an adult.

That's why we're encouraging parents to listen to their children and to talk to them, rather than lecture. Take a look at The Underwear Rule: How to talk about keeping safe and feel free to use language and ideas you know your child will understand. All the information we've provided has been developed with parents and experts in child protection.

What if my child says something that worries me?

If your child says something that seems far too 'adult' for their age, or worries you in any other way, get some advice – talk to a teacher at school, children's services or get in touch with us on 0808 800 5000. We're here 24/7 to give advice and support.

If it's nothing to worry about, you can feel assured that you've checked it out. If the professional advises that it might need a bit more exploration, they can support you along the way.

If your child tells you something, whether it's about them or a friend, know that it's probably a huge relief for them to be able to tell you.

Your initial response is important. Whatever you think and feel, it's about reacting with love, support, openness and reassurance. It's not something to be frightened of – we are here to support you and help you move forward. Call us on 0808 800 5000 or use our [online form](#).

Further advice and support

- There are answers to more questions at [nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) but if there's anything else you would like to know, we'll be happy to help.
- The Underwear Rule is a really useful way to remember what your child needs to know. Take a look over the points and use them to answer your child's questions. Download our free resources on [nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- If you ever need help, advice or support, contact us. We're here 24/7. Call 0808 800 5000 or use our [online form](#).
- If you're a child and you're finding it difficult to talk to an adult you trust, ChildLine can help. Call them on 0800 1111, it's free even if you're using a mobile. ChildLine is ready to listen and can help you find the right words.

