



## Pants are Private!

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.

### What are the PANTS rules?





## 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.





## 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 we 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.







## 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 our safeguarding team school**, Children's Services or get in touch with the NSPCC for advise.

If the professional advises that it might need a bit more exploration, they can support you along the way.

If it's nothing to worry about, you can feel assured that you've checked it out.

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.**





## How to remember the PANTS rules



There is an easy way to remember how to talk PANTS



Each letter in the word PANTS gives you one of the safety rules

# PANTS



**P**rivates are private

**A**lways remember your body belongs to you

**N**o means no

**T**alk about secrets that upset you

**S**peak up, someone can help







P is for  
**Privates are private**

Parts of your body covered by underwear are private. No one should ask to see, or touch them.

Sometimes doctors, nurses or family members might have to. But they should always explain why, and ask if it's OK first.



A is for  
**Always remember your  
body belongs to you**

It's your body, no one else's.  
No one should make you do  
things that make you feel  
unhappy or uncomfortable.

If anyone tries to touch  
you in a place that makes  
you feel uncomfortable,  
tell an adult you trust.

If you don't want to talk  
to someone you know  
you can call Childline  
on **0800 1111**.



N is for  
**No means no**

You are allowed to say no,  
even to a family member  
or someone you love.

Remember, you are in control  
of your body and your feelings  
are important.

T is for  
**Talk about secrets  
that upset you**

Secrets shouldn't make you feel  
upset or worried.

If they do, tell an adult you trust.  
You will never get into trouble  
for sharing a secret that upsets  
you.



S is for  
**Speak up,  
someone can help**

Talk about stuff that makes you worried or upset.

An adult you trust will listen, and be able to help.

If you don't want to talk to someone you know you can call Childline on **0800 1111**.





## HOW: BRINGING UP THE SUBJECT AND LEARNING TO LISTEN



Parents and carers often tell us that finding the right words can be difficult.

But one thing really helps you start to talk openly about keeping safe:

building up your listening skills.



## The art of listening

When your child talks, really listen. Lean in, nod, and smile. It shows you care about what they think and how they feel. It will mean your child is more likely to come to you if something's really troubling them.

Ask your child questions. Do they think keeping secrets is right? What would they do if they were scared or worried?

Then let them say whatever they think, and give them time to answer.

You can then back up and add to any ideas your child has about staying safe, like telling an adult if they're worried.





## WHEN: BEING AWARE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK



By creating that culture of talking and listening, you're really getting things off to a great start.

It's best not to treat these conversations like a lecture, but to find easy ways to have comfortable chats, little and often.

Start small, and be honest and open with answers to the inevitable questions.

Finding the right moment to talk can help.



Weaving simple conversations about staying safe into the daily routine stops it feeling like a big deal, or weird, for your child.

When you're running your child's bath, or helping them with things like getting dressed, you could start a conversation about why there are times when a trusted adult might need to touch them.

If you're on your way to school, ask your child who they would tell if something was upsetting them.

If you're going swimming, you could talk about the idea of private parts being private.

Car journeys are a great time to talk to your child. They're in a comfortable setting, with limited distractions.

School lessons about personal relationships can provide a great opportunity to talk about staying safe. Ask what your child remembers – it's a good starting point for more detailed conversations.







## WHAT: FINDING THE ANSWERS TO YOUR CHILD'S QUESTIONS



We realise that inviting questions means you're going to need to offer some answers.

But don't worry, you don't have to have them all, and you don't have to do it alone.

Don't shy away from awkward questions – answer them as best you can, in a way that's right for your child.

Helping your child understand the grey areas, and encouraging them to express their opinions, will help them develop their own judgment.



## What's good and what's bad?

Conversations about right and wrong aren't easy.

Even when we talk to children about not letting people touch their private parts, we have to make exceptions, such as visits to the doctor.

Talk about times when an adult might have to touch them, ask if they think it's OK or not, and reinforce the idea that your child always has the right to say no.

Exploring lots of different scenarios of 'right' and 'wrong' can help.

Take homework as an example. Your child might find it boring, but do they understand why doing





## Who could your child tell?

Getting your child to think about all the people in their life they can trust is really useful.

It shows your child that even if they feel they can't tell you something, they should never have to keep a worry to themselves.

There's strength in numbers. The more your child is aware of all the people they can talk to, the more likely they'll be to tell someone as soon as they have a problem.

Talk about the family members, trusted friends, professionals or teachers – even childline – who are there to listen.

Make sure your child knows that if a trusted adult doesn't listen to them, they should keep trying until someone helps.





## Keep going as they're growing

We hope this guide helps you have simple conversations that keep your child safe. Remember to continue talking and listening to your child.

As they grow up they will have more questions and be able to understand some of the issues in different, more detailed ways. And above all, it'll mean that talking and sharing worries will become part of your family's life.

To find out more about why it's important to talk to your child, the Underwear Rule and further sources of support, **speak to your school's Safeguarding Team.**

**Miss Khawaja will be happy to help with this or any other safeguarding concern you may have.**

**Call school and say you would like to share a safeguarding concern. We are here to listen, help and support in any way we can.**

or visit [nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)

0808 800 5000. 24/7 to give advice and support.

