

# Personal Safety & Healthy Child Development

The purpose of this sheet is to provide parents and educators with background information on child development and personal safety that will help with making important decisions in the best interest of children's personal safety.

## The Growing Personality

Children 5 to 7 years of age...

- » Want everything to be fun.
- » Ask a lot of questions — they are trying to understand their surroundings and see the world with themselves at "centre stage."
- » Are full of life. They often overstep boundaries and speak abruptly.
- » Are thinking in the here and now. Everything is black and white.
- » Enjoy fantasy play and haven't completely ruled out the possibility that some fantasy isn't real (such as monsters, ghosts and Power Rangers®).
- » Experience more fear (i.e. monsters, ghosts, witches, robbers, etc.).
- » Look to *safe adults* (especially parents and teachers) for how to process new information and whether they should be scared or not.
- » Tend to personalize events that happen to others and need reassurance that they are safe.
- » Need a positive relationship with a parent (caregiver) and their teacher.
- » Gain a more developed conscience.
- » Are beginning to learn that they gain positive recognition when they accomplish things.
- » Don't generally follow rules for games. They are more likely to follow simple rules enforced by adults.
- » Develop capacity for empathy and guilt, but can quickly lose that empathy if they feel jealous or competitive.
- » Feel shame and humiliation when adults discover something they shouldn't have done.
- » Enjoy learning about their bodies.



## What do 5- to 7-year-old children want to do?

- » Walk to and from friends' houses on the same block.
- » Walk to and from school.
- » Go to play dates at friends' houses.
- » Play games electronically and online.
- » Take part in extra-curricular activities, such as art, dance, music, sports, sleepovers and birthday parties.
- » Go to school for full days, including staying for lunch.



## Things to Consider

- » Provide a high level of supervision during activities offline and online.
- » Explain to children that the Internet is a public place just like the store, the neighbourhood, the playground or going to someone's house. Set the expectation that you will always monitor them online to increase their safety.
- » Explain to children what the Internet is and what it can be used for.
- » Use parental controls on your computer.
- » Limit the amount of time children spend online.
- » Ensure children always get your permission before sharing personal information or accepting anything while on or offline. Teach them what is meant by personal information and where on the Internet they may be asked for it.
- » Be careful not to overreact to mistakes, as they will interpret the reaction literally, feeling shame and worry.
- » Model appropriate boundaries and re-establish boundaries when they are broken.
- » Discuss OKAY and NOT OKAY touching.
- » Teach the difference between *KEEP Secrets* and *SPEAK Secrets* (a *KEEP Secret* is harmless and will eventually come out, like a surprise party; a *SPEAK Secret* is one that children are told to never tell and makes them feel uncomfortable, like someone showing them sexually explicit pictures). They need to tell a *safe adult* about *SPEAK Secrets*.
- » Help them build positive relationships with *safe adults* at home and at school (e.g. a parent, aunt, grandparent, teacher, etc.).

This information sheet was created after consulting sources such as: Linda Ashford; Sharon Cooper, M.D.; Gavin de Becker; Erik Erikson; Jay Giedd; William Glasser, M.D.; Daniel Goleman; Michael Gurian; Kenneth Lanning; Mary Anne Layden and Linnea W. Smith, M.D.; Judith Lewis Herman; Amy Lynch; Jean Piaget; David Soussa; Deborah Yurgelun-Todd. Final content and arrangement is the responsibility of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection Inc.