



Simple conversations to help keep your child safe





Talk PANTS and help keep your child safe

We want to help you, as parents and carers, talk to your children about staying safe from sexual abuse. That's why we're asking you to talk PANTS – it's an easy way to have that very important conversation.

Simple conversations – like crossing the road safely, bullying and dealing with strangers – are subjects that you and your child might talk about. Rightly so. But what about staying safe from sexual abuse? It's a conversation no parent wants to have but thankfully, with the help of our friendly dinosaur Pantosaurus, it doesn't have to be scary. By talking PANTS you have a simple way to help keep your child safe from sexual abuse – without ever using scary words or even mentioning sex.

With hundreds of thousands of parents having already talked PANTS with their child, we know these simple conversations really can help keep them safe. **And that's what – over the next few pages – we will help you do.**



Having a simple conversation

From P through to S, each letter of PANTS provides a simple but valuable lesson that can help keep a child safe: that their body belongs to them, they have a right to say no, and that they should tell an adult they trust if they're worried or upset.



“It gave you the tools in order to broach the subject”

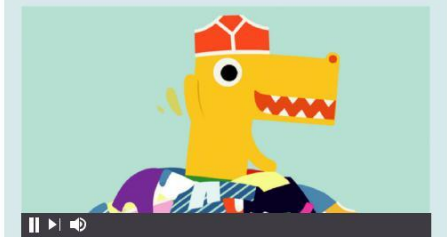
Parent of girl aged 9

How and when you talk PANTS with your child is your choice. After all, you know them better than anyone. You'll know when they're ready and how much detail you need to go into.

This guide will give you everything you need to get those conversations started – and make it as easy as possible. The centre spread of this book is designed to be pulled out for you to use with your child when the time is right.



Our friendly dinosaur mascot Pantosaurus is a great way to get the conversation started. Your children will love his catchy song which acts as a fun introduction to the key messages of PANTS and shows how Pantosaurus uses the rules to stay safe. There's also a quiz which you can do with your child. You can find them both at nspcc.org.uk/pants





Talking PANTS

PRIVATES ARE PRIVATE

Be clear with your child that your underwear covers up your private parts and that private means private. Explain to them that no one should ask to see or touch their private parts covered by their underwear, or ask them to look at or touch anyone else's. Sometimes doctors, nurses or family members might have to. Explain that this is OK, but that those people should always explain why, and should ask your child if it's OK first. Most importantly, tell them 'what's in your pants belongs only to you'.

ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU

Let your child know their body belongs to them, and no one else. No one has the right to make them do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. If someone asks to see or tries to touch them underneath their underwear they must say 'NO' – and tell someone they trust and like to speak to.

NO MEANS NO

Make sure your child understands that they have the right to say "No" to unwanted touch – even to a family member or someone they know or love. No one should ever make them do things that make them feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

This shows that they're in control of their body and their feelings should be respected.

We know if a child feels confident to say no to their own family, they are more likely to say no to others.

"I really wholeheartedly think talking PANTS should be up there with how to cross the road."

Parent of girl aged 6

TALK ABOUT SECRETS THAT UPSET YOU

Your child needs to feel able to speak up about secrets that worry them and confident that saying something won't get them into trouble.

Explain the differences between 'good' and 'bad' secrets. Bad secrets make you feel sad, worried or frightened, whereas good secrets can be things like surprise parties or presents for other people which make you feel excited.

Let your child know that telling a secret will never hurt or worry anybody in your family or someone you know and love.

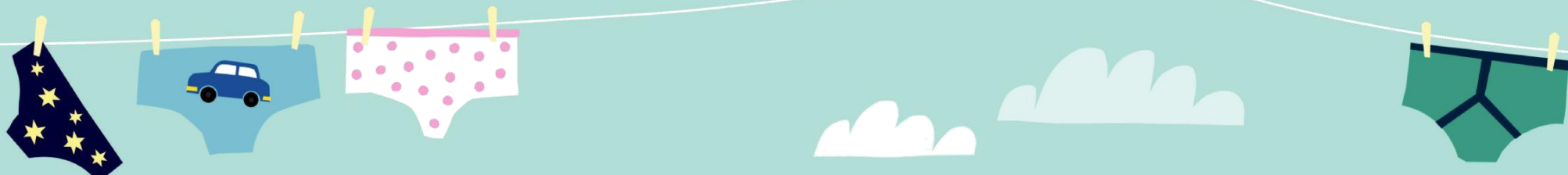
Pressuring children to keep secrets can be a way to intimidate them and make them feel worried or scared to tell someone what is happening to them, so let your child know that a secret should always be shared in the end.

SPEAK UP, SOMEONE CAN HELP

Tell your child it's always good to talk about stuff that makes them upset. So if they ever feel sad, anxious or frightened they should talk to an adult they trust. Remind them that whatever the problem, it's not their fault and they will never get into trouble for speaking up.

They can speak to you or someone like an older brother or sister. And it doesn't have to be a family member. It can be a teacher or a friend's parent. They can also speak to Childline (see page 14 for more info on our Childline service).





Your questions answered

Why is it so important to talk PANTS?

We know from our work that it's so important your child understands these rules and knows how to stay safe. We understand that conversations like this can be difficult for both you as a parent and for your child. You don't want to scare or upset your children, and you may feel it's too soon – but PANTS has been created specifically to make sure these conversations are as easy and appropriate as possible for children between the ages of 4-11 (though we also know that the earlier you have these simple conversations about staying safe, the better).



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, reassuring and child-friendly. 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. We also know there are times when you may need to overrule your child's preferences to keep them safe – like when you're crossing the road – but it helps if you explain why.

The fact that thousands of parents have already talked PANTS means we know it works. Since we launched PANTS we've spoken to many parents who have had the conversation and one thought shines through: just how simple and vitally important it is to talk PANTS.

“I felt relieved because it was light hearted and not as heavy as I thought it would be.”

Parent of girl aged 8

Does this mean I have to talk to my child about sex?

No, we created PANTS so that you don't have to mention sex or abuse until you feel your child is ready. But if your child asks questions, it's really valuable to take the opportunity to talk.

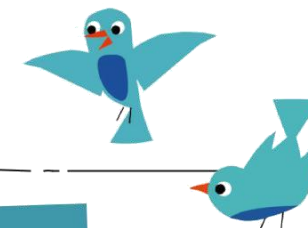
You can show your child that you're open to having conversations. And it will help your child feel confident that they can come to you whenever they're worried.

What if my child says something that worries me?

If your child says something that worries you in any way, get some advice. Talk to a teacher at school or call us on our helpline on 0808 800 5000. Our experts are 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.

Remember, it's probably a huge relief for your child to be able to talk to you.

Whatever you think and feel, it's about reacting with love, support, openness and reassurance. It's not something to be frightened of – we can support you and help you move forward.



To help make talking PANTS as useful for your child as it can be, here are some tips and techniques we recommend:

- Don't view conversations about staying safe as a one-off. It's much better to have conversations little and often. This will help you to reinforce the key points, and to adapt the message as your child gets older.
- Once you're ready to talk, you might find your child isn't. That's OK. The most important thing is to not force the issue. The last thing you want is for your them to feel it's a big deal.
- Weaving simple conversations about staying safe into the daily routine is a great way to stop it

feeling like a lecture. If it feels less weird for your child, it will feel much easier for you too.



Talk to us

You can find lots more information and support about talking PANTS, as well as talking and listening techniques, at **nspcc.org.uk/pants**. If you ever need to talk, don't hesitate to contact us. We're here 24/7. Call **0808 800 5000** or send one of our counsellors a message at **help@nspcc.org.uk**



If a child you know needs to talk, they can always call Childline for free, confidential help.

childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

**Talk PANTS... and have the
simple conversation that can
keep your child safe**

This guide has been created with you – parents – in mind. It will help you have the important conversation with your 4-11 year old child about their body, and what to do if they're made to feel worried or uncomfortable.

nspcc.org.uk/pants

