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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! To Talk Teen Stranger Danger

If you're a parent or other caregiver of teens, you are likely to have had repeated "stranger danger" talks with them when they were younger. You taught them not to talk to strangers. You warned them not to fall prey to the stereotypical child lure of being offered candy to get into someone's car, and so on. Those types of stranger danger safety conversations, though critical for little ones, tend to decrease as our kids get older. Child safety experts say however, that those age-appropriate type safety talks are critical for older children as well and need to continue into and throughout their teenage years.

According to the FBI, it is our teenagers that are by far the most frequent victims of nonfamily abductions and that the victim was kidnaped within a quarter of a mile from their home. If this makes your heart beat faster just thinking about it, you're not alone.

The following tips are compiled from multiple child safety experts to help your teen avoid potentially dangerous situations and help us, as parents, breathe a little easier. Here's what to share with them:

- Always tell an adult (preferably a parent) where you're heading. That way, if you're faced with a risky situation, your family and friends will know where to find you. Keep your parent(s) updated on any plans that may suddenly change.
- Don't travel alone. There is safety in numbers. It can be especially risky to hang out at places like the mall or the park by yourself.
- Stay on the main routes and avoid shortcuts that take you through isolated areas.
- If someone you don't know or don't feel comfortable with offers you a ride, say NO.
- If you are approached by an adult for help or for directions, stay alert, as this may be an attempt to draw you in closer. And keep in mind, adults should ask for help or directions from other adults, not children.
- Be aware of other teenage lures. Instead of candy, you may be offered things like alcohol or drugs to get into someone's car.

- If anyone follows you, bothers you or makes you feel uncomfortable, get away from him or her as quickly as you can, then be sure to tell a parent, teacher or other trusted adult.
- One of the most important tips – TRUST YOUR GUT! If something doesn't feel right, don't do it. Do not be concerned with being impolite or hurting someone's feelings.
- If someone does get a hold of you and tries to take you somewhere, do everything in your power to quickly get away and yell, "This person is trying to take me away!" or "This person is not my father (mother)!"

Keep in mind, this is not a one-time conversation. These tips need to be shared with your teen repeatedly. Just think back to how many times you had to remind them to look both ways before crossing the street. It takes hearing this info time and again to really sink in.

Some parents may be hesitant about having this conversation with their children, fearing it will "scare" them. Child safety experts however, encourage you to dismiss that notion and say that teaching kids about safety doesn't scare them, it empowers them.

Sources: [Michelle Boykins, Phil Lerman, Dani Tucker - NPR News: Child Safety - Stranger Danger Warning Needs Updating](#). [Child Development Institute: Child & Teen Safety Issues](#). [Child Development Institute: 5 Tips for Keeping Your Kids Safe When Home Alone](#). [Ken Wooden: Child Lures Prevention](#).

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