



Protecting our children

A guide for parents and carers of young children.
This booklet gives you simple words to use at home,
with your child and with the other adults in your
child's life, to keep children safe.

A JOINT INITIATIVE OF

Body Safety

Australia

GENWEST

GENWEST ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT





About the authors

Body Safety Australia promotes childhoods free from violence where children enjoy equitable and respectful relationships.

We deliver evidence-based programs to children, young people, families and communities to help prevent violence towards children in the home and school environments, offline and online.

Find out more at www.bodysafetyaustralia.com.au

GenWest works to prevent and respond to family and gender based violence in Melbourne's west.

We support people and communities to live safe and healthy lives through social and health education programs.

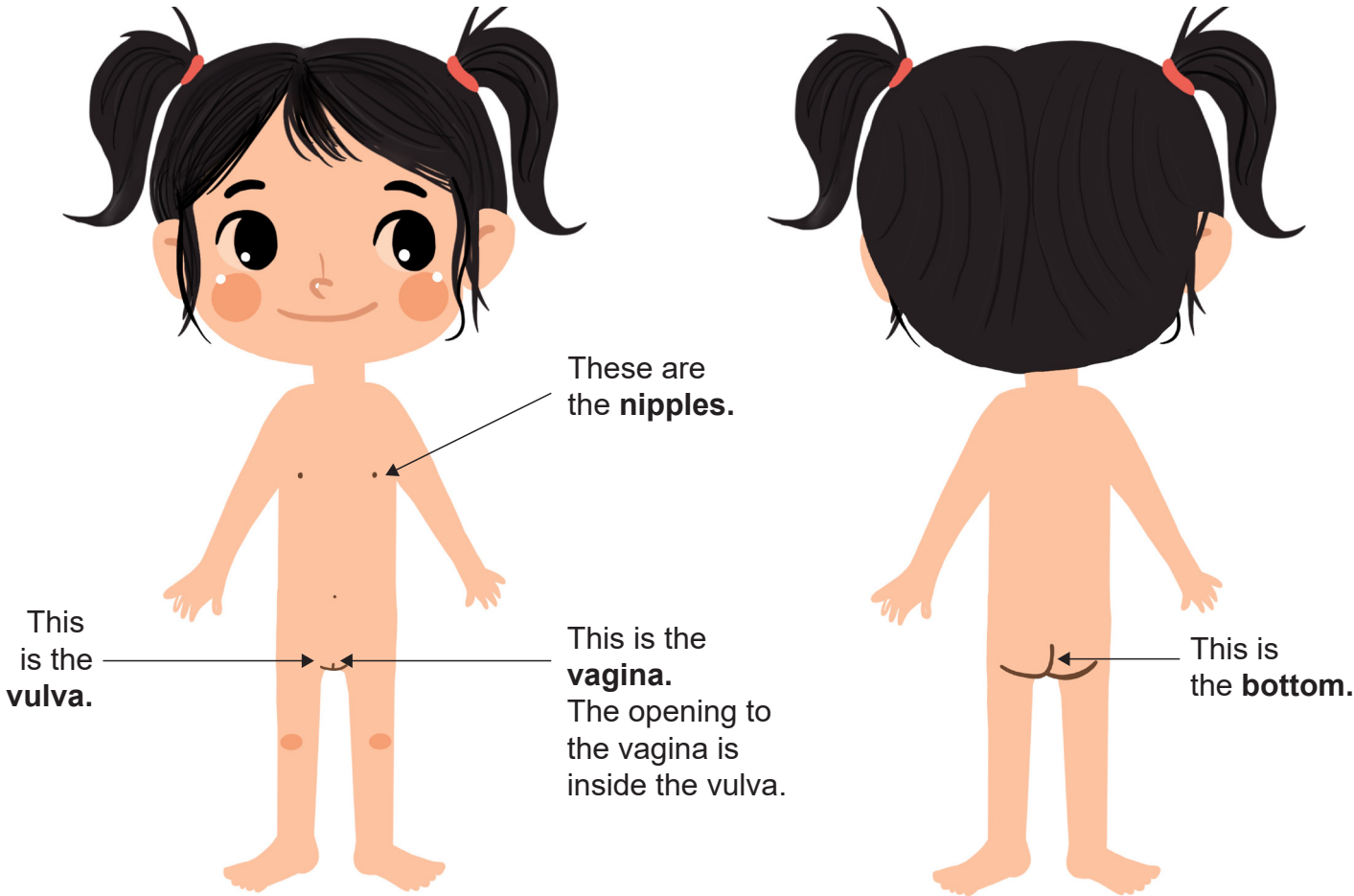
We also support adults and children experiencing family violence to stay safe and get the help they need.

Find out more at genwest.org.au

CHAPTER 1

Talking to young children

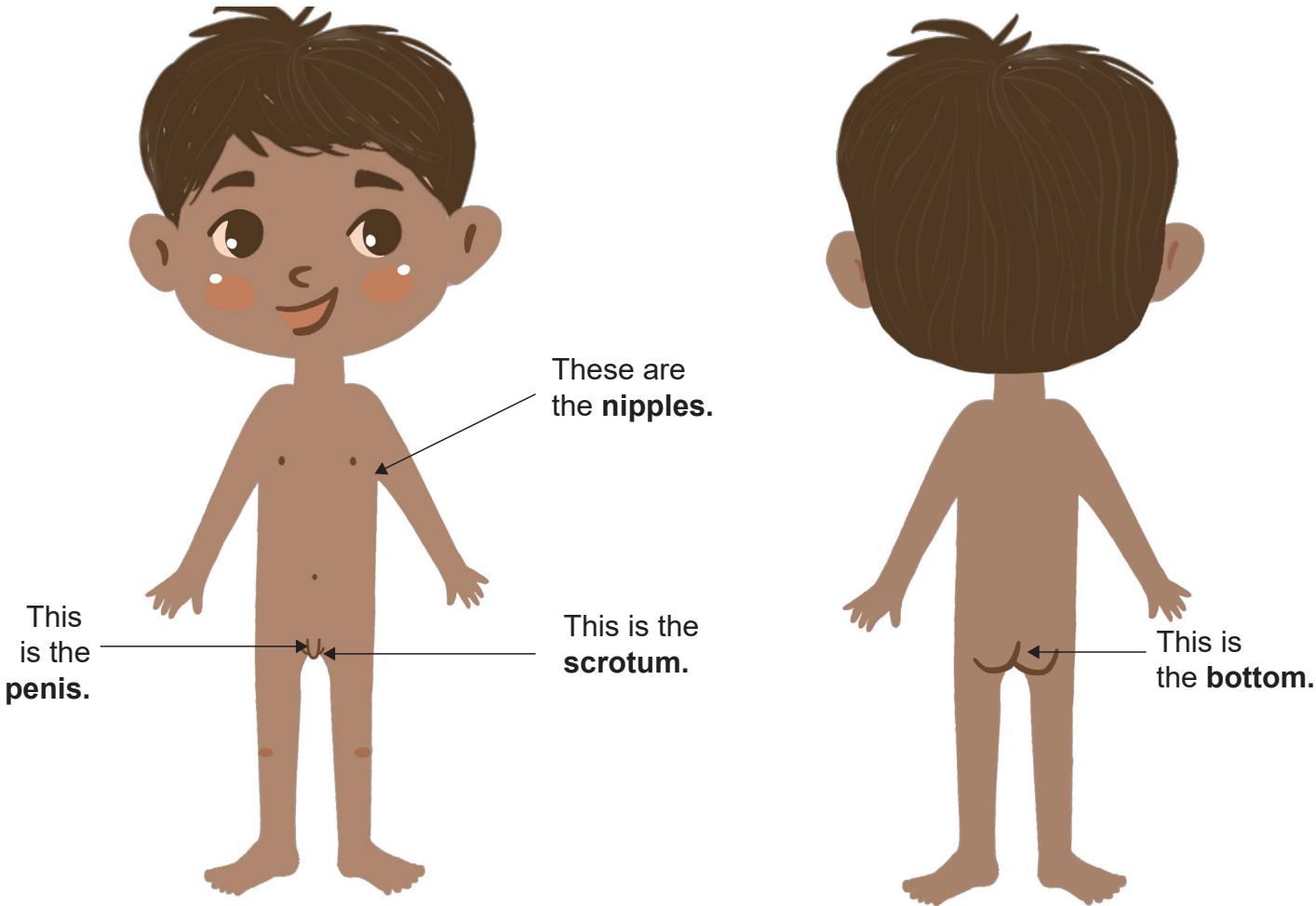
Children are safest when adults talk with them often about their rights and listen to them. This chapter gives simple words parents can use with young children at home.



CONCEPT 1

Body Parts

When children know the words a doctor might use to talk about bodies, they can speak up and tell a trusted adult if something is wrong.



Parent Scripts

We use the doctor names for body parts in our family. Knowing the words for your body keeps you safe.

Can you wash your own body? Can you wash your arms, your stomach, your penis or vulva, your nipples and your bottom? All parts of your body belong to you.

We ask before we take photos of your body or your face. We don't take photos of private body parts.

Notes

CONCEPT 2

Safe feelings

When children understand what safe feels like in their body, they can recognise safe people and seek help when they need it.

Parent Script

Safe feelings feel good in your body. Your heart might feel slow and steady. Your stomach might feel calm and relaxed. You might want to smile or laugh.

Parent Prompts

My body feels calm and warm. How does your body feel right now?

Can you draw what safe feels like in your body?



Unsafe feelings

When children can notice unsafe feelings in their body, they can recognise early warning signs and move towards safety.

Parent Script

Unsafe feelings can feel scary. Your stomach might feel wobbly. Your heart might beat fast. You might want to run away. You might feel like crying. You might go very still and quiet.

Parent Prompts

I saw that you looked scared. When I feel scared, my body shakes and my heart beats fast. What is happening in your body when you are scared?

Can you draw what feels unsafe in your body?



CONCEPT 4

Secrets & surprises

When children learn the difference between secrets and surprises, they are less likely to be silenced and more likely to tell a trusted adult if something feels wrong.



Parent and child scripts

A surprise is something happy we share later. A secret is something we are told to never tell. A secret might make us feel sad or scared. In our family, we do not keep secrets.

Child

I don't keep secrets. I will tell my safe grown up.

You never have to keep a secret. You can always tell me. I will listen and help you.

CONCEPT 5

What to do if something feels wrong

When children practise what to do if something feels wrong, they are more able to speak up and seek help early.

Parent

If something feels wrong, you can say 'no'. You can move your body away. You can tell a safe adult. Let's practise together. Let's play a game called 'No, Go, Tell'.

How to play:

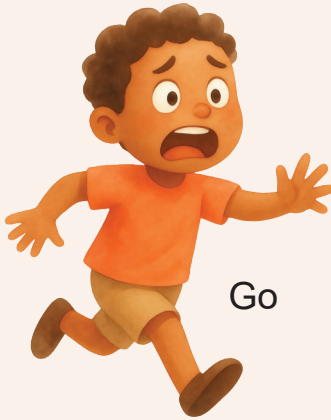
Parent calls out an action: **NO**, **GO**, or **TELL**
Child does the action

Actions:

NO! = child says 'No!' in a strong voice and holds up their hand
GO! = child moves their body away (steps back or goes to a safe space)
TELL! = child runs to safe adult and says 'I need help'



No!



Go



I Need Help!

No

Go

Tell

Children can also communicate 'no' with their bodies.

CHAPTER 2

Children are safer when we support them together

Keeping children safe takes courage. This work is not for one parent alone. We need every adult who cares for a child to support body safety. Working together makes children safer.

Conversation starters

To help your partner or co-carer understand the importance

To introduce the concept

I've been learning about how some adults hurt children. I want us to work together to keep our child safe. Can we talk about body safety?

I know it may not feel important, but it matters for our child's safety. It will help them feel safe and know what to do.

To agree on shared language

I want us to use the same words about body safety with our child. Can we use a family body safety phrase?

Our family body safety phrase
**Your body belongs to you.
You can always come
to us for help.**

CHAPTER 3

Talking with elders, extended family, faith and community leaders

Children are safer when the adults around them share language. It can feel hard to talk about body safety with elders or leaders, especially when ideas are new or different. Through courageous conversations, we can work together to keep all children safe.

Welcoming grandparents or elders - Introducing body safety

Parent Scripts

I've been learning about how some adults hurt children. We both want to keep children safe. I want to make sure my child knows their body belongs to them and that we are here to help them if anyone tries to hurt them. Can we talk about body safety?

I've been learning about how some adults use children's photos for bad reasons. I want to teach my child that they can say no to having their photo taken. Can we talk about consent for photo taking and sharing?

Welcoming grandparents or elders - If the elder pushes back

Parent Scripts

I understand this is different from what we did when we were young. We want to keep children safe in today's world. Using these words is about care and love, not blame or shame.

I understand that it feels disrespectful when a child says no to hugs and kisses. But there are so many ways children show us love and respect.

Responding to pushback

Pushback

We did not discuss these things when I was young and we were fine.

Response

Times have changed, and children face different risks today. We want to give children the knowledge and tools to stay safe. This is not disrespecting the past, it is caring for the child now. Sometimes these things happened to people when we were young, too. It is good that we are making children brave.

Welcoming Faith or Community Leaders

Parent Script

We both want to keep all children in our community safe. Body safety helps children learn what is safe and what is not. This is part of our shared responsibility to protect them.

CHAPTER 4

Sharing what you have learned with friends and family

You do not need to be an expert to share what you have learned. Even small conversations with friends and family help children stay safe.

Conversation Starters

We have started to ask our child before taking or sharing photos of them. Have you considered doing this?

At bath time, I say to my child: 'Your body belongs to you. You can always come to us for help.' It is simple and helps children feel safe.

I learned a simple way to talk to young children about their bodies. Can I share it with you?

I found out about resources and services that talk about body safety for parents of young children. Would you like to read them with me?



Spread the word!

Simple message for the community group chat
Hi everyone! I want to share what we do to keep our child safe. We tell them often 'Your body belongs to you. You can always come to us for help.' It is short, easy and powerful...give it a try!





GenWest and Body Safety Australia recognise that the land on which we work and provide our services always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We proudly acknowledge the First Nations communities across Naarm, Melbourne's west, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their rich diversity, cultures, histories and knowledges, and the deep contribution they make to the life of this region.

We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonisation, as well as the strength and resilience of First Nations people, and express solidarity with the ongoing struggle for land rights, self determination, sovereignty, and recognition of past injustices.