



# Resources for Child Caring

*Raising the standard of care for children*

## Home Alone: Make Sure Your Children Are Ready

Many states have laws concerning the legal age when children can be left unsupervised (see *County Supervision Guidelines*) but there is no guarantee that when children reach this age they will be ready. All children mature differently, so there is no precise age when it is appropriate to let children stay home alone. This makes the decision to leave children alone even harder for parents. However, there are questions parents can ask themselves to help determine if their children are ready.

Can your children...

- Be trusted to go straight home after school or after playing at a neighbor's house?
- Easily use the telephone, locks, and kitchen appliances
- Follow rules and instructions well?
- Handle unexpected situations without panicking?
- Stay home alone without being afraid?
- Say their full name, address, and telephone number?

If you feel comfortable leaving your children home alone and feel that they are ready, discuss it with them and start practicing what they should and shouldn't do. Role play different scenarios to prepare them for anything that might happen when they are home alone.

### What Parents Can Do

Parents often worry when their children are home alone, but there are precautions they can take to ease their worries and help protect their children when they're not around.

- **Stay in touch.** Call children throughout the day to ask how they are and what they are doing. Ask children to check in before they leave the house and to call again when they return.
- **Keep kids connected.** Post important numbers by the telephone, including parent's work and cell phone, the doctor's office, and a neighbor or a nearby relative who can help children quickly if they need it.
- **Practice what to do in an emergency.** Teach children how to dial 911 or "0" and when to do it. Ask questions like "If someone is trying to get in the house, what should you do?" "If you get hurt, what should you do?" and "If you want to play at a friend's house, what should you do?"
- **Set firm rules.** Make clear what children are allowed to do and what they aren't allowed to do. Can they use the Internet when home alone? Can they invite a friend over? Can they invite several friends over?

National Crime Prevention Council - Taken from: [http://www.ncpc.org/parents/Home\\_Alone.php](http://www.ncpc.org/parents/Home_Alone.php)

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