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## STAYING SAFE WHILE HOME ALONE

Children at home alone should be able to prevent and cope with emergencies. They must also have a strong sense of responsibility and be mature enough to care for themselves. Some children enjoy caring for themselves and welcome additional responsibilities while others become easily bored, lonely or scared. Only the adults closest to the child know if he or she is ready to spend some time at home alone.

Within a home there are various potential dangers including fires and burns, falls, poisoning, choking and suffocation, electrocution, unintentional use of firearms and drowning. Here are some tips on how to reduce the risk of injury when an older child is at home alone for a short period of time.

### Fires/Burns

- Install smoke detectors outside all sleeping areas and on every level of your home.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Turn your water heater down to 120 degrees F. This temperature will not scald but should provide plenty of hot water.
- Teach your child what to do in case of fire and how to get out of the house quickly.

### Falls

- The surface under play equipment should be soft and resilient, not hard ground.
- Keep stairs well-lit and clear of clutter.

### Poisoning

- Put safety latches on all cabinet doors, or store medicines and other poisonous substances in original containers with child-resistant caps, locked out of reach.

### Other Hazards

- If guns are kept in the house, keep them unloaded and locked separate from the ammunition.

Help your child create an emergency safety kit. This kit should contain a flashlight, first aid kit, battery powered radio and any special instructions. The kit should be kept in an easy to reach place. Post emergency phone numbers near the telephones.

Don't expect children under the age of 10 to be able to take care of younger siblings and don't leave children younger than age six in the care of older siblings.

Teach your children common sense safety precautions such as how to use and answer the telephone, especially how to call 911. They should never tell a caller they are home alone.



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Children should know where and how the door and window locks operate and how to make sure they are secured. Teach them to never enter the house if the door is ajar or any windows are broken. Instruct them to go to a safe place and call police. Teach them to carry the house key out of sight. Keys should never be identified with a name and address.

Children should be instructed to check in immediately upon arriving home. They should call you or a designated relative or neighbor.

**Acknowledgments:**

National Crime Prevention Council

[Safe Kids Worldwide](#)



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