

Child Safety

Raising the Level of Safety When Your Children Are Home Alone

Home is the place where children feel protected and secure. Yet, everyone knows that home isn't always a safe place. It's the place where accidental injuries often occur. Young children should never be home alone. Children under the age of 12 generally need adult supervision for all but short periods of time.

When your children are home alone, they should understand that they are accepting adult responsibilities for their safety. The following tips will help you ensure the safety of your children when you can't be home with them. Agree on ground rules when you are not home (cooking, leaving the house, having friends over). Have telephone numbers posted (where you can be reached, fire and police, neighbors, nearby relatives). If your children arrive home to an empty house, have them call and check in with you. Establish rules about answering the telephone or the door. Be sure they understand the importance of not telling strangers that they are home alone.

Enroll your children in a course on safety procedures for children. Your local hospital or YMCA may offer classes of this type. Investigate programs in your area that may benefit your child, such as grandparents' programs and check-in programs. Talk with your children about their concerns when they are home alone.

Establish guidelines for your children's use of the Internet. Many parents have clear rules about what their children should say to strangers on the telephone. Use the same care with the Internet.

Your children need a lot of support and guidance if they spend regular time home alone. Remember to keep in touch with your children and with what they are doing when you can't be with them.

In Case of an Emergency:

Fire: _____

Police: _____

Neighbor: _____

Relative: _____

Mom's Work: _____

Dad's Work: _____