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Keeping Your Kids Safe When they are Home Alone

Your child comes home from school at 3:00, but you don't get home from work until 5:00. He's at home alone for those two hours every weekday. What does he do until you arrive? Most likely, he gets a snack or gets on the Internet. Maybe he watches TV. But since you're not there, you worry. Just like the majority of American parents who work and have to leave their children on their own after school every day, you are anxious about your child's safety.

But by following the safeguards listed below, you can help ease some of this worry and take measures that will protect your kids even when you're not around.

What You Can Do

Make sure your children are old enough and mature enough to care for themselves. Children typically reach this maturity level between 12 and 14 years old.

Can your children:

- Be trusted to go straight home after school?
- Easily use the telephone, locks, and kitchen appliances?
- Follow rules and instructions well?
- Stay alone without being afraid?

Teach them the basic safety rules and know the three "W's": Where your kids are, What they're doing, and Who they're with.

A Word About Curiosity

Are there things you don't want your children to get into? Take the time to talk to them about the deadly consequences of guns, medicines, power tools, drugs, alcohol, cleaning products, and inhalants. Make sure you keep these items in a secure place out of sight and locked up, if possible.



Teach Your Children:

- How to call 9-1-1
- How to give directions to your home, in case of emergency.
- How to use the door and window locks, and the alarm system if you have one.
- To never let anyone into your home without asking your permission.
- To never let a caller at the door or on the phone know that they're alone. Teach them to say "Mom/Dad can't come to the phone (or door) right now."
- Do NOT ignore the caller and pretend that no one is home.
- If the caller persists, instruct your child to call 911.
- To carry a house key with them in a safe place (inside a shirt pocket or sock). Don't leave it under the mat or on a ledge outside the house.
- How to escape in case of fire.

Tell your children NOT go into an empty house or apartment if things don't look right - a broken window, ripped screen, or opened door. If they encounter one of these circumstances, instruct them to call 911.

Your children should always let you know about anything that frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable.

You will notice a common repeated message here. When in doubt about their safety, you and your children should call 911. Our job is to keep you and your family safe!

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