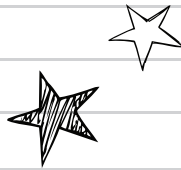





SAFE AT ★
HOME ALONE

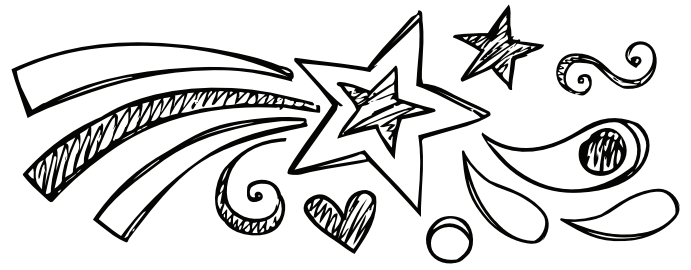
A Guide for Parents Deciding on
Self-Care for their Child



Detach this
section and give to
your parents!



Are you trying to decide if you should leave your child home alone? Are you afraid your child will have an accident or emergency they cannot handle in your absence? Do you trust your child to stick to the “house rules”? This brochure is a quick outline of some of the things you should consider when deciding to give this huge responsibility to your child. Because children develop at very different rates, a child’s age is not a good way to tell if he or she is ready to stay home alone. The issue is not one of age, but of maturity and the ability to handle key situations responsibly. Even if your child is never home alone, this information can help you teach safety and encourage your child’s growing independence.

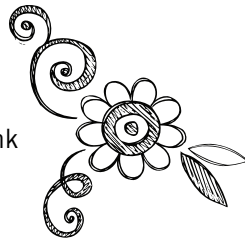


Is my child mature enough to leave at home alone?

Age is not the only factor to consider when leaving your child home alone. Certain clues will tell you if your child is mature enough for self-care.

Does your child:

- Follow rules?
- Have self-control?
- Have the ability to problem-solve, think logically?
- Set goals and work toward them?
- Occupy self without getting bored or feeling lonely?
- Follow through with commitments on chores?
- Keep his side of the bargain when you have an agreement about something?
- Have the ability to handle key situations responsibly?
- Take messages accurately in writing?
- Say no to peer pressure if appropriate?
- Is my child physically mature (can he open doors, windows, necessary cabinets)?
- Can he operate shut-off valves for gas, water, electrical boxes?



If you can answer yes to these questions without uncertainty, your child is probably mature enough to stay home alone.

Is my child prepared for the basics of self-care?



Other factors to consider include emotional health; length of time left alone; time of day or night; other children present or to be supervised; location and environmental conditions; frequency of being left alone; and the accessibility of a parent or other responsible adult. Consider the following list of things when preparing for your child’s time alone:

- Medical Emergencies - Does your child know basic first aid? Who to call? When to call 911? Does your child panic under these circumstances? Do you have basic first aid supplies readily available for your child?
- Weather Emergencies - Does your child know what to do or where to go during a weather emergency?
- Siblings; how well do they get along?
- Can your child get ready for school on his own?
- Can your child prepare simple meals for himself?
- Is it dark when your child leaves or comes home?
- Have there been any major changes in your child’s life recently (new baby, death, move, separation, divorce, remarriage)? It’s best to allow your child to adjust to one major change before introducing another.
- Is there alcohol and drug abuse at child’s school, especially among peers?
- Have children in your community been victims of violent crimes while on their own?
- Do you have deadbolt locks on your house?
- Has anyone in your home ever lost keys? Have locks been changed?
- Any homes in neighborhood recently been burglarized?
- Any expensive electrical equipment visible through a window?
- Any trusted adults home in your neighborhood during the time your child is alone?
- Any groups of kids that “hang out” in your neighborhood?
- How safe is the route your child takes to and from school?
- How close is the bus stop?
- Are there any construction sites or empty buildings near your home?
- If there are businesses in your area, what kind of customers do they attract?
- Are there emergency services readily available (police, fire, medical)?
- Do you have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each level of the home?
- Hazardous materials stored safely?
- Firearms unloaded and locked up with ammunition locked in a separate location?
- Are there any overloaded outlets or frayed electrical cords?

What are my other alternatives (community resources)?

School age children typically learn a lot from observing and interacting with other children, their parents and other adults. Team sports, youth groups and enrichment activities are often missed opportunities with self care. Many child care providers offer activities as part of their program. Checking with local community resources for alternatives can help you include some of these into your child's daily activities.

What length of time will my child spend alone?

Time alone can be a major factor in your child's adjustment to self-care. Long lengths of time alone are more likely to bring on fears, boredom and loneliness, especially after nightfall. Shorter time periods (1-2 hours), bring on a feeling of responsibility and maturity.

What kind of contact will I have with my child while he's alone?

Check-ins allow for both parent and child to feel more confident. Allow the child to check in with you, a relative or neighbor. This will help avoid potential problems.

Do I have any worries or fears towards self-care?

Your attitudes toward self-care can be transmitted to your child. Fears, worries and uncertainties can be sensed by children, causing them to have the same concerns. Alleviate your concerns by properly preparing your child for self-care.

What are our "house rules"?

Rules and expectations must be agreed on by both parent and child. If a shared responsibility for creating these rules exists, they are more likely to be followed. As much as possible, involve your child in deciding what issues need rules and what the rules will be. Also, include him in deciding what the consequences are for not following these rules. Be specific. Below is a list of some of the things you might consider on your "house rules" list. You may have others you would like to add.

- Phone use
- Friends: Can they be in the house when you're not home? How about in the yard? Can your child go to their friend's home?
- Food & Cooking: What can your child cook? What foods are "off limits"?



(consider allergies, diabetes, etc.)? Which appliances can they use (stove, microwave, etc.)?

- Use of electrical appliances: Which ones are they allowed to use? Can they use them safely?
- Play time: Don't make the child's time home alone a chore list - allow for play time and set rules on what is and isn't acceptable.
- Homework: When are they to do their homework?
- Chores: Make sure they know exactly what is expected of them.

Guidelines for Supervision of Children

The following are guidelines for supervision of children as established by the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Bismarck, North Dakota.



- Children eight (8) years of age or under should normally be supervised at all times. The child in this age group should not be left in charge of other children.
- Children who are nine (9) years old should not be left unsupervised for periods greater than two hours during the daytime. This age child should never be unsupervised at night and should not supervise other children.
- Children who are 10 and 11 years old may be left alone for 2 hours or less with ready access to an adult supervisor. Children in this age group should not be responsible for younger children. Children should not be left unattended overnight.
- Children who are age twelve (12) and older may be permitted to act as baby sitters. It is recommended that they successfully complete an approved child-care training course. Children should not be left unattended overnight.
- Children in early adolescence (12-14 years), should not be left unattended overnight.
- All children left home alone must be able to demonstrate:
 - Knowledge of where their parents or other responsible adults are and how to reach them.
 - Knowledge of emergency procedures.

The ultimate responsibility of the safety, care, well-being and behavior of dependent children remains with the parent, whether they are present to personally supervise them or not.

It is considered by the North Dakota Department of Human Services that a lack of supervision exists when the above guidelines are not followed. A lack of supervision may also exist in circumstances where the responsible caretakers are present but physically or mentally impaired to such an extent that they are unable to provide supervision.

For more information contact
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