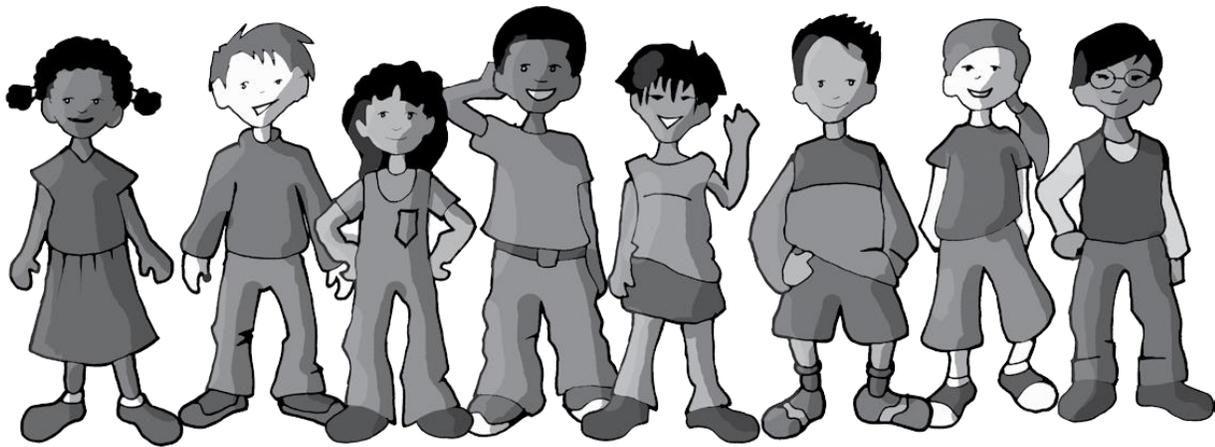


# Parent Guide

# Safe at Home Safe Alone



In Cooperation with:



Revised 2017



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

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2016 revisions by Carrie Busekist, 4-H Agent, Prince William County, and Kathy Simmons, Volunteer Prince William.

2017 revisions by Claudia Lefevre, Prince William County 4-H.



# Safe at Home, Safe Alone



is a 4-H Program of

## Virginia Cooperative Extension

**Safe at Home, Safe Alone** is sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension as a 4-H program. 4-H is the youth development program of the Virginia Cooperative Extension, and is the largest volunteer-led, co-educational youth program in the world. For millions of members across America, 4-H means individual achievement, a challenging future, and a lifetime of service to community and country. The four H's of 4-H stand for head, heart, hands, and health. The 4-H motto is, "To Make the Best Better." The goal of 4-H is developing life skills.

Your vision of a 4-H member may be a farm child with a blue ribbon calf, or a child sewing their own clothes. While these are still popular projects in 4-H, you should know that 4-H is much more than that. In fact, today's 4-Hers are more likely to come from cities and suburbs, participating in many exciting projects and programs. For instance, 4-H members can learn how to make rockets, give speeches, go hiking, attend summer camp, acquire finance skills, learn culinary skills, raise animals (even train guide dogs), discover new places, and most importantly, gain life skills. 4-H puts kids in contact with new friends and dedicated adult leaders.

As you look for meaningful commitments for your kids, consider 4-H. If you would like to know more information about local opportunities for your 5 through 19 year olds, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.



# A Program about Children in Self-Care

## **Parents: Welcome to the Program!**

The decision to leave a child in self-care is a serious one, and can be scary for both children and parents. To aide families with this decision, The Safe at Home, Safe Alone program has been developed by Virginia Cooperative Extension to offer education to families on the subject of children in self-care. It is the objective of this program to make both children and parents aware of the many issues that need to be considered when deciding to leave a child at home without adult supervision.

The program has both a youth and parent component. The Youth Book is filled with real-life situations that could occur when home alone, along with information on life skills that enable a child to cope with these situations. The child will gain an awareness of the many decisions a family will need to make together when considering self-care. In the Parent Guide, the subject of self-care is discussed from your perspective. The issues discussed will parallel those in the Youth Book. And it is most important that parents and children share their information. You will want to discuss what you are learning with your child, engage the whole family in the activities in the parent book, and participate in the youth activities that require your assistance. Together, you will gain much information about self-care and you will find yourself prepared and ready to make an informed decision about leaving your child home alone.



## Is Your Child Ready for Self-Care?

Parents often ask, “When is my child ready to be home alone?” The answer is different for each child. There is no magic age when a child is automatically ready for self-care. Local government agencies offer guidelines for appropriate ages and length of time for leaving a child alone, but even if your child meets these guidelines, your child may not be ready. Perhaps you have thought of leaving your child alone for just a few minutes while you run an errand or for a longer period of time before or after school. How will you decide when the time is right to allow your child to stay home alone?

Parents begin to think, “What life skills does my child need to know? What emotional readiness should my child have?” Researchers say two factors seem to be the most important in successful self-care.

1. Children should have a strong sense of how they should spend their time alone.
2. Children should feel the presence of a parent even if it is on the other side of a telephone.

Use the checklist on the following page to assess which areas your child is competent for self-care and which areas need work. You want your child to have the necessary life skills for self-care prior to being left alone.

If you make a decision for self-care, consider having a trial run first to evaluate how it goes. Have you given your child more responsibility than he or she can handle? Is your child expressing more fears than before? Has your relationship stayed the same or worsened since self-care started? After asking these questions, you may feel that your decision for self-care has been a good one, or you may wish to explore the possibility of other options.

The **Safe at Home, Safe Alone** program acknowledges the need for all children to be prepared with life skills necessary for self-care, even if not in a self-care situation. This Parent Guide provides material that allows you and your child to explore feelings about self-care, assess your child’s readiness, and prepare yourselves with practical information to cope with what the reality of life may be like when your child is home alone.

**Remember...Completion of the Safe at Home, Safe Alone program does not certify that a child is ready to be in self-care. That is a family decision!** Should you decide your child is ready for a period of self-care, your challenge is to create a workable self-care plan for your family and **Safe at Home, Safe Alone** will help.

## **Checklist For Parents When Considering Self-Care**

### *Read and Answer These Questions*

Do you consider your home and neighborhood safe environments for leaving your child in self-care? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Has your child expressed an interest in self care? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Does your child know their name, address, and phone number? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider your child old enough to make good choices in managing time? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider your child old enough to assume self-care responsibilities? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Do you and your child communicate well about feelings, both positive and negative? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Can your child walk to/from school by themselves? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child able to be responsible with a house key? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child able to use the phone for routine situations as well as emergencies? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child able to fix a snack? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child able to identify emergency situations and act in an appropriate manner? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child able to consistently act in a safe manner when left alone? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Are there adults that your child may be able to contact if needed? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Has your child stayed home alone for short periods of time and felt good about it? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Does your child follow family rules? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Does your child follow instructions? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

If your child is in self-care with siblings, are they able to get along, resolving conflicts as needed? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child able to complete homework and chores with minimal supervision? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Can your child resist the influence of friends? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child afraid to be left alone? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Do you know local regulations regarding what constitutes child neglect? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Parents: Look at your answers. If you have answered “**Yes**” to a question, this is an area in which your child is mastering a life skill associated with readiness for self-care.

If you have answered “**No**” to a question, this is an area that needs to be worked on. The Safe at Home Safe Alone Program will give you the information needed to teach and reinforce those life skills needed for self-care.

# PARENTS: Be Aware That Children Face Challenges When In Self-Care!!

Here are four areas in which your child will face challenges when in self-care. These topics will be addressed in this program.



## Safety



Safety risks increase when children are unsupervised. Children need instruction in avoiding accidents and coping with emergency situations.



## Emotional



Feelings of loneliness, boredom, fear, rejection, and insecurity can be present for the child in self-care. Children need skills to help them cope with these feelings and replace them with more positive emotions.



## Responsibility



Chores, care of siblings, phone calls, emergency situations, etc., can put more responsibility on children in self-care. Children need much more direction in order to take on the added responsibility successfully.



## Peer Pressure



Peers can place pressure on children to act in ways that are beyond the rules. Children need self confidence to say “no” to friends who try to persuade them to do things they know are inappropriate. This inappropriate behavior includes breaking family rules, acts of juvenile delinquency, acts of violence, alcohol and drug use, and bullying.

# What Will Your Child Need To Know When In Self-Care?

Below are a list of topics that you and your child need to talk about before beginning self-care. Many of these topics are addressed in the Parent Guide and Youth Book, so you and your child will have common ground for discussions regarding self-care.

- ✿ Guidelines for a family meeting and establishing family rules
- ✿ Rules of key safety
- ✿ How and when to use the phone when home alone
- ✿ How to identify a stranger and avoid danger
- ✿ What to do when a stranger comes to the door
- ✿ How to have a safe home
- ✿ How to identify an emergency
- ✿ What to do in an emergency situation
- ✿ What to do in a medical emergency
- ✿ What to do in a weather emergency
- ✿ What to do in case of fire
- ✿ How to communicate feelings about being home alone
- ✿ How to cope with worries, fears, loneliness, and boredom
- ✿ How to plan time when home alone
- ✿ How to work together as a family
- ✿ How to get along with siblings when home alone
- ✿ How to know what a friend is and how to be a friend
- ✿ How to cope with peer pressure
- ✿ How to make healthy food choices



Share with your child what you want your family's response to be in each and every situation. This communication of information will do much to prepare your child to be resourceful, responsible, and reliable.

## **Family Activity:**

Show your child the Parent Guide and communicate that you will also be learning the Safe at Home, Safe Alone program. Ask your child to share what they are doing in class. Let your child know that you will be excited to hear what they are doing and learning!

# What Makes a Family?

Having a strong family gives confidence to each family member, and that confidence is needed if a child is going to be home alone. A family is a group of people who depend on and are responsible for each other. Each family is unique in make-up and in character. Your family is particularly special because it is your family. Most of us live a fast-paced lifestyle and the pressures of life are demanding. A strong family can give support to each member in encountering everyday life responsibilities and stresses. How can we work toward keeping our family strong? What are the qualities of a strong family? Try to put these qualities into practice!



## Qualities of a Strong Family

### ❁ **FAMILIES DO MANY THINGS TOGETHER**

They play together, work together, and eat together. It's not a smothering, exclusive, stifling togetherness; rather, it's spending time together that builds a good relationship. Finding time to spend together doesn't just happen; strong families make it happen!

### ❁ **FAMILIES HAVE A COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER**

If a family member needs help, the family is there! Members of strong families show and say their feelings of affection, praise, and encouragement. Support is unconditional, not dependant on an individual's abilities, successes, or failures. Strong families perceive themselves as a worthy group and members are proud to be counted as family. Strong families treasure family traditions and are proud of what makes their family unique.

### ❁ **FAMILIES COMMUNICATE**

Members of families share their feelings, concerns, and interests. They talk about the trivial or the deep and profound. They practice communication that is clear and open and encourage individuals to take responsibility for their feelings, thoughts, and actions. They show each other that, "I respect you enough to listen to what you have to say; I respect you as a person."

❁ **FAMILIES DEAL WITH CRISIES, TOUGH SITUATIONS, AND STRESS IN A POSITIVE MANNER**

They help and support one and other, but they are also willing to seek outside help if there's something they don't know how to handle. Strong families are connected to other individuals and institutions (schools, churches, 4-H, and other local organizations) on whom they can depend for emotional and practical support when needed.

❁ **FAMILIES CAN MAKE GOOD DECISIONS TOGETHER**

They use techniques for solving problems that encourage everyone to be responsible. They share power and decision-making strategies among parents and children. When parents make and enforce rules, the reasons for those actions are communicated clearly. Because there is an atmosphere of mutual respect in strong families, decisions are made that everyone can live with. When everyone has participated in making the rules, compliance becomes a non-issue.

❁ **FAMILIES EXPRESS A LOT OF APPRECIATION FOR EACH OTHER**

They make each other feel good about themselves and they do so every day! A basic need for any person is to be appreciated and needed. Some families have a ritual of saying one good thing about each person every day.



# Families Need Family Rules

When the time comes for children to left alone, the first order of business is to establish and communicate family rules. These family rules need to be followed by the child when home alone and parents are not present to enforce them. Parents are unable to know everything that goes on when they are not at home with their children, so it's important to enlist the support of their children to build a set of rules that can be followed while the parents are not at home. Working together to create the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules helps to create a set of family expectations for behavior. These rules will help create guidelines for a safe self-care environment.



## What Will Your Family's Rules Be? Ask Yourself These Questions:

When my child is home alone.....

- ✿ Is my child allowed to go outside?
- ✿ What kitchen appliances can they use?
- ✿ Is my child allowed to take a bath or a shower?
- ✿ Can my child take the dog for a walk?
- ✿ Is my child allowed to have friends over? What friends?
- ✿ What are the phone rules?
- ✿ How much computer/TV/video game/cell phone time is allowed?
- ✿ What are the daily chores to be done?
- ✿ What is my child's "check-in" plan?
- ✿ What adults can my child call for help?

Family rules are a wonderful way for parents to help children understand certain values and maintain a sense of family harmony. Children really thrive when they have ample opportunity to learn about positive values when they feel able to share their own ideas and are given opportunities to discover and explore within safe boundaries. Writing and posting family rules are a great way to do all that.

Family rules do not need to be a long exhausting list of “can’t dos” and “must dos” to be effective. Creating and using family rules can be a positive and family oriented activity. Here are some ideas to consider when writing up family rules:

### **1. Keep it simple**

There is no need to list off every single thing you expect your child *to do* and *not do* in the house. Instead of a giant no-no check list, it may help to think of family rules as guidelines, a source of inspiration and gentle reminders. Choosing words that are simple, yet representative of the values you wish to share with your children for years to come tend to work well.

### **2. Invite children to participate**

Children are much more likely to respect family rules if they have been a part of the creative process. Inviting children to create the family rules can be a great way to connect, as well as an opportunity to hear what kind of values your children are already starting to think about.

### **3. Make a visual**

Displaying the family rules somewhere proudly is a great way for the whole family to remember and be inspired by the rules everyone came up with together. Some ideas for creating a visual could be to use family pictures, inviting children to draw a picture, or writing the rules together on poster board. For very young children, having pictures that represent each value may be helpful.

### **4. Review**

Rules pasted on the wall may be a great visual reminder, but taking the time to review the family rules together, say once a week or so, may be a great way to keep everyone inspired. It should be often enough for everyone to remember, but not so often it becomes annoying. This might change as they get older.

### **5. Revisit**

As children grow, it may be helpful to revisit, rewrite, or re-evaluate the family rules to make sure they are age appropriate. As children approach the tween/teen years, taking a moment to talk and make agreements about limits and expectations can be very helpful towards maintaining family harmony, while still giving the children a certain sense of independence and choice.

# Have a Family Meeting!

Now you are ready to talk about “family rules” with the family. The family meeting creates an opportunity for all family members to come together as a unit and express grievances, share values, ask questions, make plans, express desires, and take part in family decisions. Although the family meeting is a good idea for any family, it is particularly useful for families where both parents work outside the home. Having meetings schedules family time on a regular basis and keeps the lines of communication open.

## Guidelines for a Family Meeting

- ✿ Invite everyone in the family to the meeting
- ✿ Have a regularly scheduled meeting time
- ✿ Have an agenda for the meeting
- ✿ Treat everyone respectfully; let everyone be heard
- ✿ Talk about the good things happening in the family
- ✿ Include planning for family fun
- ✿ Have a time limit for the meeting and stick to it
- ✿ Keep a record of decisions made and post it



## Don'ts for the Family Meeting

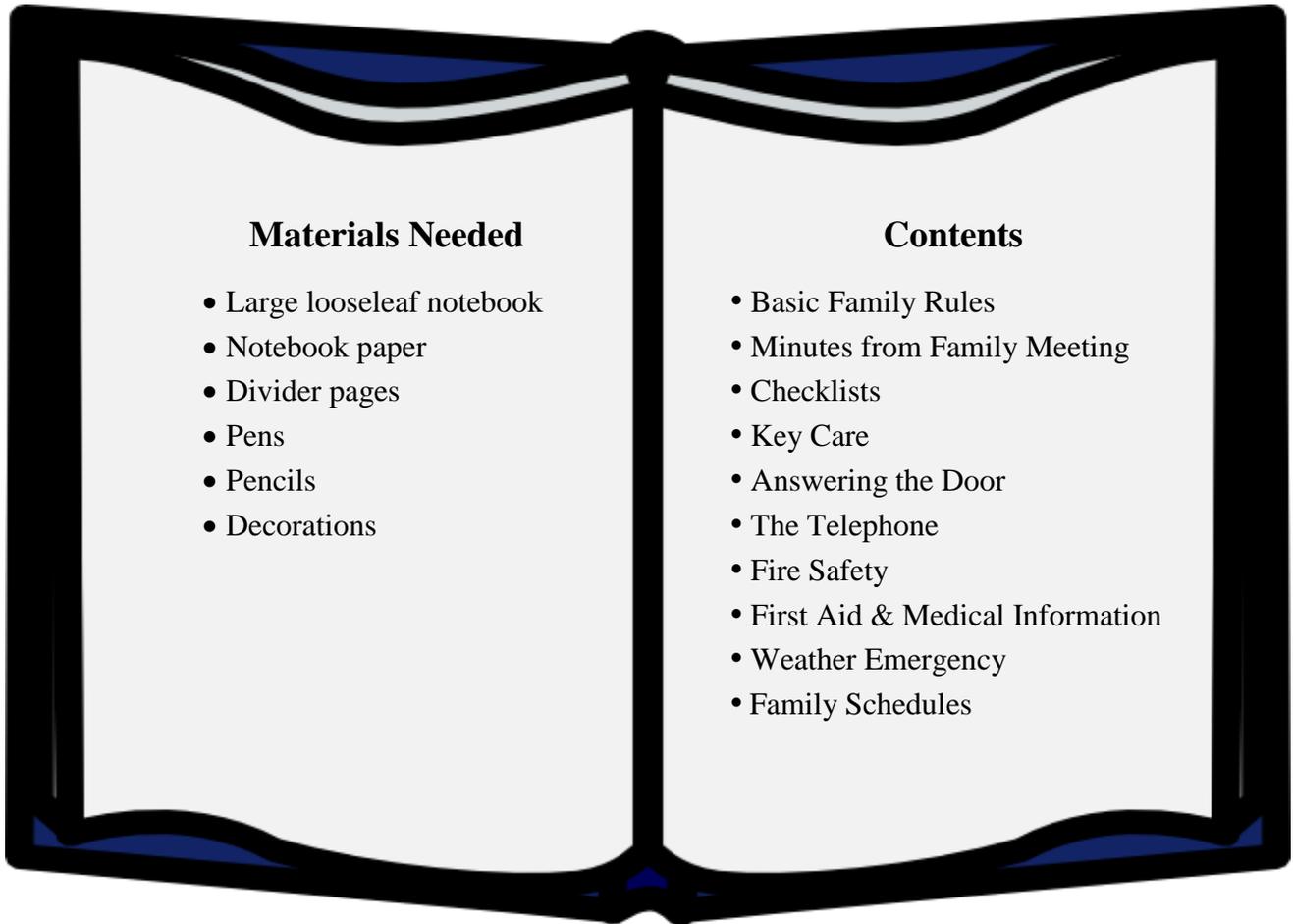
- ✿ Don't meet only during a crisis
- ✿ Don't skip meetings or change times
- ✿ Don't fail to listen, you need to encourage each other
- ✿ Don't allow one member to dominate the discussion
- ✿ Don't focus on complaints and criticisms
- ✿ Don't meet only to assign chores or to hand out punishments
- ✿ Don't fail to implement family decisions

A family meeting does not mean that parents are bound by what their children want. It does mean that all family members have an opportunity to be heard. Some rules, like those about safety, will be “absolute” rules and non-negotiable. Other rules will be suitable for open discussion in which your child has input. Rules that are discussed, understood, and jointly developed, are more likely to be followed.

Regularly scheduled family meetings can help parents get a realistic picture of how the self-care situation is working out. Family meetings will provide the opportunity for families to bond, communicate, and support one another. Your family meeting will have a unique character of its own, because your family is unique.

## Family Activities

**Activity 1.** Put notes from your family meetings into a “Family Information Notebook”.



**Activity 2.** Schedule a Family Meeting. At the first meeting discuss what Family Meetings are all about. Ask someone to take notes. Initiate discussion about your family’s rules and expectations. Plan and schedule your next meeting together.



# Key Care

As adults, we realize how upsetting it is to lose our keys, lock them inside our car, or lose our house key and be locked out. Misplacing a key can interrupt our entire day and cause a great dilemma. Children face the same prospect of a key dilemma when in self care. A child must keep track of a house key and know what to do if the key is lost.



## “Key” ideas to prepare your child to properly care for their key

- ✿ Teach your child to properly care for their house key. Review the rules for key safety in the Youth Book. Stress the importance of keeping the key in a safe place, where it is not prominently displayed, so that others will not know your child goes home to an empty house. If a key is worn, it is to be worn inside the clothing.
- ✿ **Do Not** put your child’s name and address on the key. This makes your house vulnerable to burglary.
- ✿ Teach your child to properly lock and unlock the locks of your home. Stress the importance of always removing the key from the lock and returning it to a safe place.
- ✿ Have a back-up plan for a time when your child loses or misplaces their key. You may wish to leave an extra key with a neighbor. **DO NOT** hide the key outside as people could watch and learn the hiding place.
- ✿ Have a second back-up plan just in case the key is lost and the neighbor is not at home.
- ✿ Teach your child to be alert when returning home to an empty house. If anything looks unusual, such as an open window, an unlocked door, or pried open door, your child should immediately go to a safe place and call the police.

## Family Activities

**Activity 1.** Take your child on a lock and key tour of your house and practice locking and unlocking doors

**Activity 2.** As a family, create a checklist of the doors that need to be kept locked in your home. Don’t forget about garage doors. Put this information in your “Family Information” book under “Key Care”

**Activity 3.** Create your back-up plans for what to do in case your child’s key is lost.

# The Telephone is the Link Between You and Your Child



The telephone is that link between parent and child that allows the child to feel the parent's presence even when the parent is not physically there. Calls to parents can provide answers to questions and reassurance. Should an emergency arise, the phone provides immediate contact with adults who can help. Compile a list of people your child can call when needed. Give your contact information to a trusted neighbor in case of emergency.

## Your Child Needs the Phone to:

- ✿ Call parent to check in when arriving home from school if in self-care
- ✿ Call 911 in case of an emergency
- ✿ Call parent or designated adult when needed
- ✿ Let parent know when there is a change of plans

## You Need the Phone to:

- ✿ Check on your child for peace of mind
- ✿ Give your child words of encouragement
- ✿ Give your child directions or information
- ✿ Let your child know of any change in schedule



Children as young as three should learn how to use the telephone to get help in case of an emergency. It is important to discuss with your child emergency situations such as fires, medical emergencies, and stranger situations that may require him or her to use the telephone to reach emergency services such as the fire department, police department, or paramedics.

*Following these steps will help you prepare your child for using the telephone in an emergency situation:*

- ✿ Teach your child the emergency telephone numbers he or she needs to know. In most cities, 911 is the number you dial for any emergency. Also post your home address and telephone number, as well as other important names and telephone numbers.
- ✿ Discuss situations and reasons for calling 911 with your child. Explain that sometimes it is not necessary to call 911. The following list may help fuel your discussion.

**It's usually good to call 911 when these things happen**

You get lost  
Someone gets hurt  
Something unusual is burning or producing smoke  
Someone is breaking into a home

**It's usually not good to call 911 when these things happen:**

A car alarm goes off  
Your pet runs away  
A stranger walks through your neighborhood  
Someone makes you mad

**Answering the Telephone While Home Alone:**

If your child will be home alone, decide whether or not you would like them to answer the telephone. If they will be answering the telephone, provide them with a response to use if a caller asks for someone who is not home. Some possible responses include: "He/She cannot come to the phone right now. May I take a message?" Or "He/She is busy right now. May I take a message?"

Practice these responses and then ask a friend or family member to call your home pretending they are a stranger so your child can practice answering the telephone.

**Taking a Message:**

If you would like your child to take telephone messages, provide a clear reminder of the information they need to ask from the caller. You may wish to post a sign on the wall to remind your child to write down the caller's NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, and MESSAGE. Keep a pad of paper and pens or pencils near every telephone in the house to make message-taking easy. Your child can practice taking messages using the message pad.

**Family Activities**

**Activity 1.** Help children make their own telephone book. List names and telephone numbers of friends and relatives. Include a picture of each person next to the name. Children can use their telephone book to look up numbers.

**Activity 2.** Establish family rules for using the telephone or cell phone. Write them in the "Family Information" book. Remember to decide on time limits for conversations with friends, how to answer calls, and good times to call parent. If your child has a cell phone, establish the rules for calls and text messages as well. If your child has a smart phone, decide what apps they are allowed to use when in self-care.

**Activity 3.** Role play with your child what they should do in different situations using the "What would you say?" page in the Youth Book.

## Computer/Internet Safety

The computer is a great resource for information and communication. Most homes now have a computer, just like a phone. And like a phone, there must be family rules about how and when your children are allowed to use the computer. You may wish to establish family rules on what time of day they can be online, for how long, and which sites they can visit.

### Computer/internet rules to share with your child:

**REMEMBER** – nothing on the web is completely private; be careful about what you share.

- Use the same safety rules as listed for the phone: do not share any personal information (your name, address, or phone number) and do not say you are home alone.
- Do not share your password with anyone other than your family.
- Do not share your school name or your team name.
- Never send anyone a picture of yourself, your family, or your home without permission.
- Be a good citizen and don't do anything that hurts other people.

**REMEMBER** – not everyone is as nice, funny, or cute as they sound online.

- Never agree to meet an online “friend” in person without your family’s permission.
- If someone asks to meet you, tell your family immediately.
- Do not respond to messages that are mean or you do not understand.
- Inform your parents if you experience any bullying online.
- Turn the computer off if anything happens to make you uncomfortable and tell your family.

**REMEMBER** – be careful with the computer; it can “crash”!

- Do not open e-mails with attachments from an unknown sender; they can contain destructive viruses.
- Always check with your family before downloading or installing new software.

## Answering the Door

Your child will need to know the procedure you want followed when there is a knock at the door. You may wish to create a “Safe Persons” list of trusted friends or family members that your child may let in the house. Keep in mind, according to the *National Institute of Justice*, 3 out of 4 adolescents who have been sexually assaulted were victimized by *someone they knew well*. You may opt to not allow your child to open the door for anyone. That is a decision that you as a family have to make. If someone comes to the door, your child needs to know what to say if you are not at home.



Tell your child not to be embarrassed by not letting someone into the home, and not to be persuaded to open that door for anything. Should a stranger be persistent, instruct your child to call for help. Stress that if the adult or even a child at the door is asking for help, the child should not feel obligated to assist. In such a case the child may call another adult for help. Never should the person be let into the home.



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The Youth Book suggests the following procedures:

1. Always keep the door **locked**.
2. **Do Not** open the door.
3. **Ask** “Who is it?” through the locked door.
4. **Never** say you are home alone.
5. Tell a delivery person to **leave packages outside**.
6. **Never let a stranger inside**, even in case of emergency.

**Remember:** *Your child has been taught to respect and obey adults, so he or she may feel obliged to do what an adult says to do. Impress upon your child that he or she is not to do what a stranger says, just because this person is an adult. This person is a stranger and could cause the child harm.*



# Stranger Safety

*Stranger danger* is a phrase commonly used to address the inherent dangers children may face as they venture out into the world. Unfortunately, the world can be a scary place for a child and there are people out there who can take advantage when a child is unaccompanied by an adult.

Being prepared, in the event your child is confronted by a stranger, is a very important issue that all parents must address, which includes having discussions with your children.

Your children should be provided with the necessary information and skills to protect themselves if faced with a dangerous situation. It is also important to remember, the dialogue you have with your child should instill a sense of confidence, not fear.

## **Stranger Safety Rules:**

Instruct your child when walking home from school, playing outside, or when in self-care to:

- ✿ Keep away from strangers
- ✿ Never talk to or go anywhere with strangers
- ✿ Never take anything from a stranger
- ✿ Scream, “this is not my father/mother!” if someone grabs him or her
- ✿ Look for someone he or she can trust and get help if a stranger approaches

## **More Hints to Give Your Child:**

- ✿ Encourage your child to tell you when he/she is uncomfortable with a person.
  - What makes them uncomfortable?
- ✿ Teach your child to be observant
  - Look at their surroundings
  - Remember license plate numbers
  - What can they remember about a person
  - Anything that can help identify a stranger

***Remember:*** *Strangers are not the only ones that can pose a threat to your child. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, **the majority of child abductions are committed by parents or relatives.** If there are any current custody orders or protective/restraining orders in place, please inform your child’s school and/or neighbors.*

## Is Your Home Safe?



You want your home to be a safe place for your child, especially when home alone. The “Safe Home Checklist” in the Youth Book will take your family on a walking tour throughout your home looking for possible safety risks. Use this checklist to start a discussion about fixing up any area of your home that poses a potential risk or where risks can be avoided.

The checklist will be a basis for your talking about how each of you as a family member must act safely in the home to prevent accidents. You will want to remind your child that your home is only as safe as your family makes it. Throughout this program, you and your child will be getting information about precautionary safety behavior.

### Family Activities

**Activity 1:** As a family, take a tour of your home with the “Safe Home Checklist,” found in the Youth Book. Discuss the list and make any corrections that are needed. Put the “Safe Home Checklist” in your “Family Information” notebook for future “safe home” checks.

**Activity 2:** Walk around your neighborhood with your child. As you walk, point out areas that you think are unsafe and should be avoided.

**Activity 3:** If your child walks to or from school, take a walk together and trace the route. Look for any areas you want your child to be cautious of and talk about the safety precautions you would like your child to take when passing through those areas.

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*Emergencies Can Happen*

*Failure to prepare is Preparation for failure*

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## **Emergencies: What Your Child Should Know**

Make sure your child knows the difference between an *emergency* and a *non-emergency*. A non-emergency is the kind of problem that your child can handle or one that can be solved when you return home. The Youth Book helps determine what an emergency is and is not.

Discuss what constitutes an emergency that needs immediate attention. An emergency exists when someone is injured or is in danger, or if serious property damage is possible.

There are also mini-emergencies which can be dealt with by the child if they have had the proper training. You and your child will be more secure with self-care if your child knows how to react in all of these situations.

Help your child by imagining all types of emergency scenarios. The Youth Book is filled with “What if” situations that require problem solving. After discussing each situation with your child, help to clarify the very best way to cope with the problem. This will help open the child’s mind to many situations that require good judgement, and it is this good judgement that needs to be developed. Your child becomes acquainted with situations that require immediate action and will know how to take action and remain safe. Acting out situations allows your child to “try on” the solution and see if it makes good sense. Should the problem occur in real life, your child will put the right course of action into play.

Continue to emphasize the importance of using the telephone correctly to make the emergency phone call. The emergency phone list should be posted and your child should be drilled on giving the correct information. Remind them that emergencies such as fire, gas leaks, and burglaries should be reported from a trusted neighbor’s phone.

### **Family Activities**

**Activity 1.** Review the pages in the Youth Book about emergencies. Read the “Make a Choice” together and talk about maxi, mini, or non-emergencies that could occur in your family.

**Activity 2.** Make an emergency kit for your home. Instructions are in the Youth Book.

**Activity 3.** Take a tour of your home to show your child how to turn off the water in your home in case a pipe leaks or a faucet breaks. Show your child what to do when a toilet overflows.

# Fire Emergency

## Children and home fires



### Fast Facts

- Children under the age of five are twice as likely to die in a home fire than the rest of the population.
- Child-playing fires are the leading cause of fire deaths among preschoolers.\*\*\*
- About 300 people per year are killed and \$280 million in property is destroyed in fires attributed to children playing with fire.\*\*\*
- Just over half of child-playing fires in the home start in a bedroom, and bedding material is most often the first item ignited.\*\*
- About two out of every three child-playing fires – and three out of every four associated deaths and injuries – involve matches or lighters.\*\* Children also start fires by playing with candles, fireworks, stoves, and cigarettes.\*\*
- Only 26 percent of families have actually developed and practiced a home fire escape plan.\*

### Preparedness Tips

- Keep matches, lighters, and other ignitable substances in a secured location out of the reach of children. Teach your children to tell you or a responsible adult when they find matches or lighters at home or school. Only use lighters with child-resistant features.
- Practice your home fire escape plan with your children several times a year. Also practice stop, drop, and roll for clothing fires and crawling low under smoke.
- Familiarize children with the sound of your smoke alarm and what to do when they hear it.
- Teach your children not to be scared of firefighters. Take them to your local fire department to meet the firefighters and learn about fire safety.
- Having a working smoke alarm reduces the risk of dying in a home fire by nearly half. Install a smoke alarm near your kitchen, on each level of your home, near sleeping areas, and inside and outside bedrooms if you sleep with doors closed. Use the test button to check it each month. Replace all batteries at least once a year.

Visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) for more information on children and fire safety.

Sources: American Red Cross,\* U.S. Fire Administration\*\*\* and the National Fire Protection Association.\*\*

# Fire Hazard Safety Check List



Walk around the house and use this check list as a family. When you find a hazard, discuss why it might cause a fire and discuss how to eliminate it from your home.

## How many hazards do you have?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Electrical outlets with more than two plugs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stacks of magazines or newspapers stored close to a heat source
- \_\_\_\_\_ Curtains hanging close to stove, heater, or fireplace
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improperly vented clothes dryer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Matches within reach of young children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fire extinguisher several years old that may be ineffective (check the date)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fireplace without a good screen or door
- \_\_\_\_\_ Worn electrical wiring or cords
- \_\_\_\_\_ Smoke alarms that have dead batteries
- \_\_\_\_\_ Containers of flammable liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, oil
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other dangerous liquids such as paint, paint thinner, varnish
- \_\_\_\_\_ Greasy areas around kitchen stove; 50% of home fires are due to cooking

## **Plan for repairs!**

Now that you have completed the checklist, begin your plan for repairs.



# Family Fire Help Sheet

**Our Family's Fire Rules (Get Out, Stay Out, Get Help!)**

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**Emergency Number for Fire** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fire Exit Plan 1** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Fire Exit Plan 2** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Our Meeting Place Outside** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Location of Smoke Alarms**

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**Dates Checked**

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# The Medical Emergency



When you are away from your child, it is important for you to feel like your child is ready to cope with any major medical emergency as well as the usual minor scrapes and scratches.

## Points to Remember:

- \* Be mindful of things in the home that could hurt your child like knives, tools, firearms, medications, alcohol, and poisons.
- \* Teach children to read labels and to know what is poisonous.
  - Look for words that mean danger: caution, poison, and hazard.
  - Point out the skull and crossbones symbol, and explain what it means.
- \* Make sure children have clear instructions about what they can use in the kitchen and what is “off limits”.
- \* Keep a well-stocked first-aid kit, and teach your child how to care for minor scrapes and cuts.
- \* Keep emergency numbers accessible to child.
- \* Go over emergency first-aid instruction. Consider taking a Red Cross class with your child.
- \* Teach your child that these are considered medical emergencies:
  - A person is bleeding heavily
  - A person stops breathing
  - A person has swallowed poison
  - A person is badly burned
  - A person has a broken bone
  - A person has a great pain in some part of the body
  - A person is unconscious



## Go over these “Dos and Don’ts”

- \* **DO NOT** move a person because you may hurt him or her more.
- \* If the person is lying down and vomiting, turn the head to the side so he or she will not choke.
- \* If the person is bleeding, apply pressure over the wound using a clean bandage and lift the bleeding part above the chest to slow the bleeding.
- \* Cover the person with a blanket so they don’t lose body heat.
- \* Loosen tight clothing to make the injured person comfortable.

## Family Activities

**Activity 1.** Review all the first-aid procedures in the Youth Book. Talk about any special first-aid procedures your family needs to follow for special health problems.

**Activity 2.** Make a first aid kit for your home. Make one for the car as well.

<http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/anatomy-of-a-first-aid-kit>

**Activity 3.** Review the “What if” situations in the Youth Book. This will start some good discussion in your family about what to do if a medical emergency arises.

**Activity 4.** Review the Safety and First-Aid crossword puzzle in the Youth Book. It is filled with rules for safety and first aid.

**Activity 5.** Fill out the Family Medical Help Sheet in this Guide. Include this in your “Family Information” notebook.



## **Family Medical Help Sheet**

Emergency Number for serious injuries: \_\_\_\_\_

Stay away from these dangerous things in our home: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do we do for a minor injury: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

People to call if you are sick or have an injury: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special notes about medicines or family allergies or conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special family rules when someone is sick: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Doctor's name and phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# The Weather Emergency

The threat of severe weather conditions causes excitement for everyone, especially to a child in self-care. How will your child react in the event of a snowstorm, blizzard, tornado, thunderstorm, flash flood, or hurricane? Weather changes can sometimes occur quickly, and your child will need to know how to react in this emergency situation.



Your child's anxiety may be increased if bad weather causes you to arrive home later than usual. You can alleviate some of this anxiety by calling home as soon as you hear of severe weather to inform your child that you might be home later than usual. You will also want to give them reminders of the proper safety measures for that particular weather emergency. Remember that in cases of bad weather, the phone lines are often down and you may not be able to reach your child, so it is necessary to be prepared ahead of time.

## Ways to Prepare

- ✿ Prepare a home emergency kit that is ready to go. Include extra batteries for flashlights and radios.
- ✿ Teach your child to call you in the event of a power failure.
- ✿ Teach your child to use flashlights or battery powered lanterns. Candles can cause a fire.
- ✿ Should water enter the home, teach your child not to turn on an appliance that is wet or when standing in water or a wet area.
- ✿ Gas leakages can occur during earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods. At the first smell of gas, teach your child to get out of the house, go to a safe place, and report the gas leak to you or the fire department.
- ✿ In case of thunderstorms, your child should know to go inside the home to avoid the danger of lightening. Once inside, your child should stay away from windows and doors. You may ask your child to unplug certain appliances such as the T.V. or computer. Instruct him or her not to use any appliances during a storm. If your child is caught outdoors away from home, give instructions to stay away from metal objects, open water, trees, and hilltops. Your child should go to a safe building as soon as possible.

- ❁ In case of a winter storm, children are often dismissed from school early or have delayed school days. Your child should know the plan for either event. Instruct your child to stay inside, keep warm, and listen to the radio or watch the local T.V. station for updates on the weather situation. Review the Youth Book for rules for weather emergencies and add any other rules that are particular for your family's setting.
- ❁ In case of a tornado alert, your child should go to a designated safe place - this is usually a basement, or if you have no basement, an interior bathroom, closet or hallway. Instruct your child to stay away from doors, windows, and outside walls. Tell your child to take their cell phone with them as well.

## Family Activities

**Activity 1.** Recheck the home emergency kit to make sure it includes a portable battery operated radio, flashlight, extra batteries, food which needs no cooking or refrigeration (3 day supply), bottled water (1 gallon/person/day for 3 days), as well as pet food if you have a pet in your family, a first-aid kit, list of emergency numbers, list of emergency procedures, extra house key, pen, paper, and pencil.

**Activity 2.** Complete the “Family Bad Weather Sheet” in this Guide and include it in your “Family Information” notebook. For every bad weather situation remember to include the safe place to go and the safe way to behave.

**Activity 3.** Have family rehearsals for the bad weather emergencies. For example, pretend a storm is coming. What will your children do? Instruct them to always save themselves and their siblings first! Never try to save any possessions or protect the house.



# Family Bad Weather Sheet

Bad weather plan for \_\_\_\_\_

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Safe behaviors \_\_\_\_\_

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What to do if parents are delayed at work due to bad weather \_\_\_\_\_

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What to do in case of power failure \_\_\_\_\_

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What to do if phone is out of order \_\_\_\_\_

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Safe place to stay in house \_\_\_\_\_

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What to do if evacuation is needed \_\_\_\_\_

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# How Will You Know Your Child's Feelings When Left in Self-Care

Knowing your child's feeling and having your child know your feelings creates a communication bond that facilitates solving many problems. As a parent, you are a primary role model for your child. Your actions, as well as your words, will help shape your child's behavior. The goal is to have an open relationship where there is comfortable dialogue between the two of you and as a family. This relationship sets the stage for you to give the very best teaching and guidance to your child and to teach competence in life skills. These skills will enable your child to act responsibly in self-care and feel more secure.

How do you achieve an open relationship? Remember, all children are different and some talk and share more freely than others, so don't be discouraged. Just maintain a close presence with your child by actively participating in his or her life. Below are ways to foster an open relationship.

- ❁ Make daily time to talk to your child about what's been happening
- ❁ Make sure you are an active listener
- ❁ Create special times when you and your child can be alone and can do an activity
- ❁ Show your acceptance of the many positive things your child does
- ❁ Express your feelings openly; you may also share with your child how things affect you
- ❁ Acknowledge your child's feelings as valid emotions and give attention to them
- ❁ Share your personal coping skills for dealing with stress, anxiety, problems, and pressures
- ❁ Talk to your child about your work, describe your workplace, and/or let your child visit
- ❁ Express love for your child

## Family Activities

**Activity 1:** Try the "feelings game" with your child to check on his or her feelings. Share your feelings as well. Pick a time when you've got full attention - maybe you're out for pizza and waiting to be served. Keep it fun and you are sure to get lots of participation.

For more activities visit: <http://www.parents.com/fun/activities/>; <http://www.jumpstart.com/parents/activities/family-activities>; and <http://www.parenting.com/article/family-activities-cheap-fast-fun>

# Help Your Child Organize a Schedule



Loneliness and boredom are feelings which can overwhelm a child at home alone in self-care. How can you best help your child to cope with these feelings? A child who has time organized into meaningful activities will be able to ward off negative feelings more easily than a child who has nothing to do.

As a parent, you can help your child combat boredom and loneliness before they happen by discussing activities your child might enjoy. Just giving your child a list of activities and asking him or her to choose might not be enough direction from you. You may need to discuss what your child really likes to do and what you as a parent would like to have done. For example, you may wish your child to do some homework, complete a few chores, and watch only a set amount of certain shows on T.V. Your child may want to fix a snack, play video games, or play with friends.

***Please note:*** *If your child is an avid user of the internet, give your child strict instructions to never give out personal information.*

Help your child create a schedule for time alone. A schedule can provide the needed organizational framework to keep a child occupied. When wondering what to do, your child can refer to the schedule for direction. Checking off the items on a schedule will also bring a sense of accomplishment.

**Day:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>3:00-3:20</b>	<b>Make and eat snack</b>
<b>3:20-4:00</b>	<b>Homework</b>
<b>4:00-4:30</b>	<b>Watch TV</b>

Activities might include snack prep, hobbies, chores, homework, TV, music, organized activities like 4-H or other clubs, sports, reading, etc. Planning with your child gives structure to your child's world and knowledge of your child's plans when you are not there.



When a child is left in self-care, it is important that they have an awareness of your daily schedule. It is helpful and comforting if your child knows when you are near a phone should they need you and when you can be expected home. You might want to fill out a schedule for yourself and include phone numbers where you can be reached. Knowing where you are gives your child the security of your presence even when alone. Make sure they have other numbers of trusted adults in times that you cannot be reached.

### **Family Activities:**

**Activity 1.** Make copies of your daily schedules and include them in the “Family Information” notebook.

**Activity 2.** Make copies of your child’s daily schedules and include them in the “Family Information” notebook.

**Activity 3.** Your child has directions for making an “I’m Bored” bag, share the contents of your child’s bag. Talk about the activities included and offer more suggestions if you have them.

**Activity 4.** Organize activity boxes for your child. One box might include art supplies and ideas for projects that your child can create alone. Another box might be filled with puzzles and another with good books and magazines.

**Activity 5.** As a family, look at the possibilities of after-school activities for your child. These activities might include clubs, scouts, sports, volunteer work, visits to the library, or a friend’s house. Discuss the logistics of your child getting to these activities and getting home. Will you need help with transportation? Could you trade weekend chauffeuring or babysitting of children with a parent who can help you during the day? Might you offer to pay for transportation?

**Activity 6.** As a family, compile a list of “good to watch” T.V. shows

**Activity 7.** As a family, compile a list of house chores. Decide who can accomplish each chore and how long it may take to complete.

**Activity 8.** Encourage an enrichment activity for your child. It may spark a lifelong interest for your child.

# A Child May Experience Fear When Home Alone

It is normal for your child to experience fear at times when home alone. Even adults can become anxious when an unusual noise is heard inside the home. A child may hear that same noise and imagine it to be the attack of a burglar. When a parent is home, a child can quickly receive assurance. When in self-care, a child will need to learn other ways to cope with fear. It is important that children who care for themselves be encouraged to talk with their parents about their fears.

## HINTS FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH FEAR

- ✿ Give life skills training to your child.
- ✿ Remember “unlikely” fears still cause anxiety for children.
- ✿ Never dismiss “unlikely” fears.
- ✿ Resist forcing a child into a situation that they find fearful.
- ✿ Allow your child to talk about their fears.
- ✿ Encourage your child to keep busy.
- ✿ When afraid, teach your child to ask “is this something I know is serious or is it something that just makes me scared”?

*Fear can be a positive emotion and can alert a child to real or potential danger! Some of your child’s fears will be “real” fears and some will be “unlikely” fears.*

### “Real” fears like....

- ✿ the possibility of a fire
- ✿ a persistent stranger at the door
- ✿ severe weather conditions

### “Unlikely” fears like...

- ✿ strange noises being mistaken for a burglar
- ✿ someone hiding in the closet

# How Fearful is Your Child When Home Alone?

## Does your child exhibit:

- \* Different eating habits
- \* Frequent nightmares
- \* Lack of interest in activities
- \* Frequent crying spells
- \* Irritability
- \* Frequent loss of temper
- \* Complaints of being bored or lonely



You may decide that even with all your reassurance, teaching, and creative planning for time alone your child is not secure with this self-care responsibility. The plan for self-care may need to be readjusted according to your child's emotional maturity. The time alone may need to be lessened, and some time spent at a friend's home or neighbors. You will know what to do after some trial and error and much communication with your child.

## Family Activities

**Activity 1.** Make a list of noises your house makes on a regular basis; for example the sound of a toilet flushing, water running in the pipes, squeaky floors, etc.

**Activity 2.** Make a list of "real fears". Talk about the ways your family has learned to cope with real fears and dangers. Look back into your "Family Information Notebook" for the rules for emergency situations.

**Activity 3.** Make a list with your child of the things that make him or her nervous when alone. Offer suggestions of ways to cope. Ask specific questions like:

- \* Do you ever feel scared when the doorbell rings and you are home alone?
  - o What do you do?
- \* Do you ever feel scared when you first come into the empty house?
  - o What do you do?



# Your Child and Siblings

What do you do when you need to leave more than one child alone in self-care? Here are some questions about siblings together in self-care and some suggestions to consider:

## **Who is in charge? What is the responsibility of each child?**

- ✿ Some families leave the oldest in charge, but this may not work well in your family. The oldest may be designated as the one in charge of decision making in time of emergency.
- ✿ Some families find it more satisfactory if each child has a set of responsibilities, and answer to you rather than to an older sibling. This seems to work well when siblings are close in age and don't want to be "bossed" around by someone nearly their same age.

## **What will your children fight about?**

- ✿ Think of the possible areas of sibling conflict: TV, computer, food, telephone, etc. Discuss situations that could occur in these potential areas of conflict and how the children can work them out.

## **Do your children know how to safely resolve conflict?**

Work out some "ground rules" for disagreements. For example, there will be no physical aggression allowed and no obscene language or name calling.

## **Here are the "Steps to Responsible Problem Solving". Remember the word PLAY!**

- ✿ **P** is for problem. State the problem. Decide: Is this really a problem?
- ✿ **L** is for listen. Listen to each side of the problem.
- ✿ **A** is for agree. Agree on possible solutions to the problem. Try a solution.
- ✿ **Y** is for yellow light. A yellow light means take a time-out if you can't agree on a solution. If you still can't agree after a time-out, an adult may need to help solve the problem.

## **Do children have individual activities?**

- ✿ Whenever possible, schedule fun activities for each child, such as school clubs, sports, or music lessons. This reduces the amount of time the children are alone together.

## **Are you positive about the self-care situation?**

- ✿ Encourage your children all the time! Let the children know you feel confident that they are doing a good job in self-care.

# Your Child and Friends

Belonging to a group of friends is an important part of our children's life. Selecting friends and developing nurturing friendships are valuable developmental skills. Parents worry about their children's choice of friends and the pressures their child might feel to try unacceptable or dangerous activities. When children are in self-care, peer pressure is a major parental concern. Fortunately, parents can equip their child with tools to make good choices for potential friends and to engage in positive behavior.



## Here are some strategies:

- ✿ Talk with your child about what qualities a good friend should have. Discuss the qualities that are not wanted in a friend. Make a list of these qualities.
- ✿ Talk to your children about the kinds of things a “friend” might encourage them to do that would be against family rules. Encourage your child to talk about their thoughts on acceptable behavior.
- ✿ Spend time with your child and their friends; get to know them.
- ✿ Encourage your child to come to you when he or she has problems with friends.

A child in self-care wants to have time with friends. You will need to make decisions as a family regarding your child in self-care and friends. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- ✿ Are friends allowed to visit while my child is in self-care?
- ✿ What happens if a friend breaks your family rules?
- ✿ Will your child know what to do? Should your child call you or their contact person should a problem arise with a friend?

If you decide yes, be clear as to which friends may visit, for how long, and the rules they must abide by.

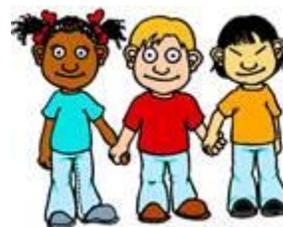
If you decide no, you will need to build in “friend time” when you are home. After school activities can provide time for your child to socialize. Perhaps your child can visit a friend whose parent is home and you can reciprocate the visit when you are home. Perhaps you can schedule a babysitter so your child can entertain a friend.

- ✿ Is my child allowed to go to a friend's house when in self-care?

If yes, which friends' homes are acceptable to visit? What if the parents aren't home?

# Your Child and Peer Pressure

When your child is in self-care, there is a great opportunity for friends to influence your child's behavior. Your child may want to spend time on the phone or texting with a friend. Discuss phone rules when in self-care.



**Here are suggestions to help your child deal with peer pressure:**

- ✿ Just say NO! And say it firmly.
- ✿ Walk away! Just leave a group of peers who are about to get into trouble.
- ✿ Change the subject to a more positive thing to do.
- ✿ Choose friends who do the kind of things that are OK with your rules.
- ✿ Talk over peer pressure problems with an adult you trust.

Reinforcing these suggestions at home will give your child some strategies for getting out of a peer pressure situation. Help your child realize that making a decision is a personal responsibility and sometimes decisions are difficult to make. Let your child know that you are available whenever they need to talk about troublesome peer problems. Having you as a good listener will be a great asset in your child's decision making process.

**Here are hints on how to be a good listener:**

- ✿ Stop Talking!
- ✿ Put your child at ease, so they feel free to talk
- ✿ Show that you want to listen. Look and act interested.
- ✿ Remove distractions. Stop everything else you are doing.
- ✿ Empathize. Try to put yourself in your child's place so you can see their point of view.
- ✿ Be patient. Allow plenty of time and don't interrupt.
- ✿ Hold your temper. Think about what you are saying.
- ✿ Go easy on argument and criticism. If you put your child on the defensive they may "clam up" or get angry.
- ✿ Ask questions. Encourage your child by showing them that you are really listening and he or she will be more likely to come to you.

***Keep family lines of communication open.*** Through communication, a family becomes strong and builds family values that can serve as a foundation for good decision making. Also verbal communication is better than texting! Many things can be confusing, misleading or misunderstood over text messaging.

## A Child Gets Hungry in Self-Care



Parents want their child to make good food choices. A parent at home is able to monitor eating habits and make sure that their children are making healthy food choices. A child that is in self-care needs extra preparation to act responsibly.

You will want to discuss the foods that you would like your child to try and the foods for them to avoid. “My Plate” can help you pick foods to fit your child’s nutritional needs (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>). Making snacks ahead of time may also help make it easier for your child to make healthier food choices when they are in self-care.

### Family Activities

**Activity 1.** Go grocery shopping as a family for healthy and good-to-eat snacks. Use the My Plate diagram to make healthy choices.

**Activity 2.** Make a list of possible snacks to eat. Put this list in the “Family Information Notebook” for quick reference. When hunger strikes, your child will have a list of healthy snacks

**Activity 3.** Make a list of recipes your child can fix when you aren’t home. There are several non-cooking recipes in the Youth Book. Include them in the “Family Information Notebook” as well.

**Activity 4.** Give your child a tour of the kitchen, explaining which appliances and tools may be used and how to use them, and which are off limits. You might fill one drawer with those utensils your child can use. Store needed supplies within easy reach of your child.

**Activity 5.** Give your child kitchen skills by teaching the skill of food preparation. Make meals together and practice safe food preparation to catch any mistakes your child may be prone to make when home alone. This can be fun and beneficial training for life.

**Activity 6.** Make a list of safety rules for the kitchen and include them in your “Family Information Notebook”. You will decide how much cooking your child can do when home alone. Your family rule about cooking may be, “never use the oven, stove, or other appliances unless an adult is with you,” or you may allow your child to do some limited cooking.

# Kitchen Safety Rules

Here are some suggested rules should you allow your child to cook in self-care or with you.



1. Check that the oven and other cooking appliances are turned off before you leave the kitchen.
2. Keep electrical appliances away from water to avoid shocks. Stay away from electrical sockets, especially if your hands are wet.
3. If you burn yourself, tell an adult immediately, and hold the burned area under cool running water.
4. Don't put knives or other sharp objects into a sink full of water. Someone could reach in and get hurt.
5. Watch out for sharp knives. Let an adult cut or slice foods or help you do it.
6. Never put water on a cooking fire -- it could make the fire bigger. Ask an adult for help! Put out a fire with a fire extinguisher. If the fire is small, it can be put out with baking soda or smothered with a lid. Leave the house and call 911 if the fire has leaping flames.
7. Don't put cooked food on an unwashed plate or cutting board that held raw food. Always use a clean plate.
8. Always turn pot handles in toward the back of the stove top. This way no one can bump into them and knock the pot over.
9. Keep paper towels, dish towels, and pot holders away from the stove top so they don't catch on fire.
10. Clean up spills right away so you won't slip.
11. Only use those appliances that you are allowed to use when you are home alone.



# Snack tips for parents

## 10 tips for healthy snacking

Snacks can help children get the nutrients needed to grow and maintain a healthy weight. Prepare single-serving snacks for younger children to help them get just enough to satisfy their hunger. Let older kids make their own snacks by keeping healthy foods in the kitchen. Visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) to help you and your kids select a satisfying snack.

### Nutrition Education Series

#### Save time by slicing veggies

Store sliced vegetables in the refrigerator and serve with dips like hummus or low-fat dressing. Top half a whole-wheat English muffin with spaghetti sauce, chopped vegetables, and low-fat shredded mozzarella and melt in the microwave.

#### Mix it up

For older school-age kids, mix dried fruit, unsalted nuts, and popcorn in a snack-size bag for a quick trail mix. Blend plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt with 100% fruit juice and frozen peaches for a tasty smoothie.

#### Grab a glass of milk

A cup of low-fat or fat-free milk or milk alternative (soy milk) is an easy way to drink a healthy snack.

#### Go for great whole grains

Offer whole-wheat breads, popcorn, and whole-oat cereals that are high in fiber and low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Limit refined-grain products such as snack bars, cakes, and sweetened cereals.

#### Nibble on lean protein

Choose lean protein foods such as low-sodium deli meats, unsalted nuts, or eggs. Wrap sliced, low sodium deli turkey or ham around an apple wedge. Store unsalted nuts in the pantry or peeled, hard-cooked (boiled) eggs in the refrigerator for kids to enjoy any time.

#### Keep an eye on the size

Snacks shouldn't replace a meal, so look for ways to help your kids understand how much is enough. Store snack-size bags in the cupboard and use them to control serving sizes.

#### Fruits are quick and easy

Fresh, frozen, dried, or canned fruits can be easy "grab-and-go" options that need little preparation. Offer whole fruit and limit the amount of 100% juice served.

#### Consider convenience

A single-serving container of low-fat or fat-free yogurt or individually wrapped string cheese can be just enough for an after-school snack.

#### Swap out the sugar

Keep healthier foods handy so kids avoid cookies, pastries, or candies between meals. Add seltzer water to a ½ cup of 100% fruit juice instead of offering soda.

#### Prepare homemade goodies

For homemade sweets, add dried fruits like apricots or raisins and reduce the amount of sugar. Adjust recipes that include fats like butter or shortening by using unsweetened applesauce or prune puree for half the amount of fat.

# **Congratulations on Your Participation in the Safe at Home Safe Alone Program!**



Congratulations! You and your child have participated in a program that prepares families with information about life skills needed when families are considering self-care. As parents, this information will serve as a resource to you - the greatest teachers of life skills to your child.

