

Staying Home Alone — Is Your Child Ready?

Whether you are going to a job or going to the store, one day your child will be staying home alone. Deciding if your child should stay home alone is often a difficult decision.

Some states have a minimum age for a home alone child. *Age, however, does not mean your child is safe alone at home.*

How do you know when your child is ready to stay home alone after school? Ask yourself:

- Is she at least 12 years old?
- Is he asking to stay home alone without a babysitter?
- Does she understand and follow basic rules?
- Does he makes good decisions?
- Does she talk with you about her interests and concerns?

Other factors that affect your decision to leave your child home alone include:

- Where you live. What is the crime rate? Is it safe? Do you have good neighbors?
- Do you have friends, family or neighbors who can help your child if needed?
- How long will your child be left alone? Will it be more than 2 – 3 hours? Will it be dark when you get home?

How does your child feel about being home alone in the dark?

- Will your child need to prepare any meals?
- Is your child going to babysit siblings? If yes, will they get along? Do they fight often?
- Can your child solve problems? Ask questions: “What do you do if there is a fire?” “When should you call 911?” “What do you say when you call 911?”

When ready, take steps to help your child stay safe while home alone. Practice alone-times. Then, leave your child home alone while you go on errands. Start with 30 minutes. Gradually increase the time left alone. Discuss the “home-alone” time with your child. Ask if there were any problems.

Talk with your child about what you expect during “home alone time.” Home-alone time is an important step towards independence. Make it safe and successful.



*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John’s Children’s Hospital
to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

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