

Safe kids Healthy kids Happy kids

Keep Your Latchkey Kids Safe and Healthy

Kids who stay home alone are called “latchkey” kids. They are growing in number. More than 3 million children under the age of 12 are home alone for part of each week. Even more latchkey teens are home alone on school days.



Working parents worry when their children are home alone. This concern is for their safety and their emotional development.

A recent study by the American Psychological Association reassures parents.

Latchkey kids can succeed. The study notes that *what they do with their time after school* is more important than a parent being at home. However, parents must remain in control and plan this alone-time.

Kids who hang out with friends without adult supervision are at a great risk for getting into trouble. Bad things tend to happen when kids are unsupervised. If your children spend time alone while you are at work, setup some home-alone rules.

- **Kids must check in** with you or an adult as soon as they get home from school.
- **You must decide how they will spend their time while home alone.** Some parents want their kids to complete homework. Others have a list of chores for their kids to complete. Children might be allowed

to relax, play games or watch TV. You do what is best for your kids. Kids and families differ.

- **Decide how you will monitor computer and TV time.** Both computers and TVs give children access to sites that are harmful. Some parents want to be at home for TV or computer time. Then, they can monitor the media.
- **Make rules regarding TV and video games that siblings must share.** You want your children to get along and avoid fights. Clear rules help them solve problems.
- **Talk to your kids about answering the telephone.** Some parents let all calls go to an answering machine. Set up a special ring to let your kids know you are calling.
- **Make sure your kids know that their friends are not allowed unless a parent is home.** Only brothers and sisters can be home alone. Make their friends welcome at times when you are at home.
- **Have a rule about answering the door.** It is best if your kids avoid answering the door while you are gone.
- **Provide healthy after-school snacks.**
- **Post a list of emergency numbers:** 911, parents’ work numbers, neighbors’ numbers, relatives’ numbers. Practice the skill of calling for help.

Set clear home-alone rules. They keep your kids safe and healthy.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John’s Children’s Hospital



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

