



CAN YOUR CHILD STAY HOME UNSUPERVISED?

Every family, child, and situation are different. Staying home alone is a step that can foster responsibility and maturity, which are important in adolescent development. But there is a safety risk if a child is left alone too soon. **The following considerations may help you determine whether your child is ready.**

- Does your child feel safe and comfortable being home alone?
- How safe is your neighborhood?
- Can your child demonstrate how to handle emergency or safety situations (for example, a stranger at the door, illness, fire safety, weather emergency, or power outage)?
- How responsible is your child? Do they consistently demonstrate maturity to follow rules when left alone?
- Is there a phone or another way for your child to contact a caregiver or ask for help? Do they know important information if there is an emergency, such as their address, phone number, medical provider or how to contact someone?
- Is your child able to lock/unlock your home's exterior doors?
- Is there a neighbor or family member nearby to offer help if needed?
- What are the rules about visiting friends or playing outside?
- If your child is alone during mealtimes are they able to safely prepare food? Are there concerns your child will be unsafe using appliances?
- How much time do you expect your child to be alone?
- Does your child have any physical or mental conditions to consider?
- How does your child handle new or stressful situations?
- What time of day (or night) will you leave your child?
- How many children will be home? Will older children have caregiving responsibility for younger children?
- Is there a legal age where you live that provides guidance? (Several states provide a minimum age a child can be left alone, ranging from 6-14. In Iowa there is not a specific age.)