



MAKE A SAFETY PLAN

Ensure your child understands potential dangers and how to avoid them.

Educate them about:

- Fire and medical emergencies
- Household hazards such as matches, cleaning solutions, drugs, stoves, and swimming pools
- Knives, guns and other weapons
- Strangers and visiting friends

Create a plan for responding to these dangers and practice it with your child. Make sure your child knows who to call in case of an emergency.

When going out without your child:

- Call a reliable babysitter, friend or family member to watch the child.
- Provide meals that don't require using an oven, stove, or microwave.
- Leave an emergency number so you can be contacted quickly.

When shopping:

- Supervise your child at all times.
- Plan your shopping times when you have someone reliable to help watch your child or babysit.
- Always take your child with you when leaving the car.

Taking your child with you when leaving the car prevents:

- Heat or cold exposure
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Kidnapping
- Physical injury by window, door, car lighter, or other vehicle parts
- Injury or harm by accidentally placing the car in gear
- Siblings harming each other while left unattended

More tips:

- Keep children in eyesight when possible.
- Use a room monitor to listen for young children while they are sleeping or napping.
- Be present with children in the bathroom, bathtub, and kitchen.
- Do not leave children alone while talking on the phone or doing activities.



Leaving Your Child HOME ALONE

Child Supervision Recommendations

Winchester Department of Social Services
24 Baker Street • Winchester, VA 22601



540-662-3807
winchesterva.gov/dss

LEAVING YOUR CHILD HOME ALONE

All parents eventually face the decision to leave their child home alone for the first time. Whether they are just running to the store for a few minutes or working during after-school hours, parents need to be sure their children have the skills and maturity to handle the situation safely. Unattended children of any age can get hurt - or even killed - without proper supervision.

HOW OLD IS OLD ENOUGH?

You may wonder at what age your child can be left unsupervised. Before leaving your child home alone, consider the following variables:

- Age and maturity of your child
- Availability of a parent, guardian or caretaker by phone or in person
- Child's awareness of how to react to an emergency situation (examples: fire, severe weather, injury to self or others)
- Health status of your child
- Child's awareness of the dangers of appliance use (examples: stove, iron) or unusual hazards in the home
- Child's reaction to being left alone

AGE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

7 YEARS AND UNDER:

Should not be left alone for any period of time, including in cars, yards or playgrounds

8-10 YEARS:

Should not be left alone for more than 1.5 hours and only during daylight/early evening hours

11-12 YEARS:

May be left alone for up to 3 hours, but not at night or in circumstances requiring inappropriate responsibility

13-15 YEARS:

May be left unsupervised but not overnight

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Make a list of emergency contacts to leave with your child and teach proper use of 911.

Is there a fire or medical emergency? Call 911.
Do you need a police officer for emergency help?
Call 911. Otherwise, call these neighbors/friends.

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

HAVE A TRIAL PERIOD

Leave your child home alone for a short time while staying close to home.

ROLE PLAY

Act out possible situations, like how to manage visitors who come to the door, to help your child learn what to do.

ESTABLISH RULES

Make sure your child knows what is (and is not) allowed when you are not home. Set clear limits on the use of the TV, electronic devices, and the Internet.

DISCUSS EMERGENCIES

What does your child consider an emergency? What do you consider an emergency? Have a code word that you and your child can use in the event of an emergency.

CHECK IN

Call your child while you are away to see how it's going, or have a trusted neighbor or friend check in.

TALK ABOUT IT

Encourage your child to share his or her feelings with you about staying home alone.

DON'T OVERDO IT

Even a mature, responsible child shouldn't be home alone too much. Consider other options, such as programs offered by schools, community centers, youth organizations, or faith-based organizations, to help keep your child connected, safe, and involved.



Scan for more tips

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Learn more online at winchesterva.gov/dss



escanear para más
consejos

Dejar a tus hijos SOLOS EN CASA

¿QUÉ EDAD ES LO SUFICIENTEMENTE MAYOR?

Todos los padres eventualmente enfrentan la decisión de dejar a su hijo solo en casa por primera vez. Ya sea que están yendo a la tienda por algunos minutos o que trabajen después del horario escolar, los padres deben asegurarse de que sus hijos tengan las habilidades y la madurez de manejar la situación de manera segura.

Recomendaciones específicas de la edad

MENOS DE 7 AÑOS:

No deben quedarse solos durante ningún período, incluso en autos, patios o áreas de juego.

ENTRE 8 Y 10 AÑOS:

No deben quedarse solos por más de una hora y media, y solo durante el día o las primeras horas de la noche.

ENTRE 11 Y 12 AÑOS:

Pueden quedarse solos hasta 3 horas, pero no durante la noche ni en circunstancias que requieren una responsabilidad inapropiada.

ENTRE 13 Y 15 AÑOS:

Pueden quedarse solos, pero no a pasar la noche.

Aprender más en línea en winchesterva.gov/dss