

In today's society, there is the pressure for children to stay home alone for a short time after school until a parent returns from work. The reality is that school age children need to be supervised by a responsible adult. If parents are unable to be there in person, they can find ways to give their children the feeling of being supervised and in turn, the feeling of being safe:

- Set firm rules, with clear do's and don'ts
- Prepare your child to deal with situations that may arise
- Specify how his or her time is to be spent
- Keep in touch - if you're hard to reach, a cell phone is a must
- Limit the time you leave your child at home alone



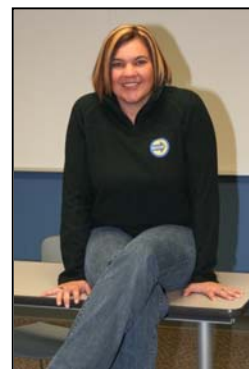
*There are four key factors in determining if a child can be left home alone:*

1. They must be over the age of ten  
(at this time should not be left in charge of another child)
2. They should only be left for an hour or two at most
3. Only if there is a responsible adult nearby to help if needed
4. They know what to do in case of an emergency

Short test runs may help you assess whether your child is ready to stay home alone. Go out for just a few minutes. When you return, talk to your child about the experience. Increase the amount of time you are out, leaving specific instructions to follow. After a few trials answer these questions:

- Does the child feel comfortable about being on his or her own?
- Do you feel comfortable about the child being at home alone?
- Can the child follow rules responsibly?
- Does he/she understand and remember instructions?
- Are you able to communicate readily with him or her when you are not at home?
- Can the child always reach someone to help in case of emergency?

At Safe Futures, we feel that the key is to prepare children for the responsibilities of self care while focusing on how to handle real-life situations, and making good choices to stay safe



Please watch for our "Staying Home Alone" clinic for kids, coming in the fall