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home alone

HOME ALONE PLAN
FOR PARENTS

Helping children handle emergencies

When children are home alone, they need to be able to understand what constitutes an emergency. Parents can help children learn about emergencies and good responses to them by having "What would you do if…?" talks. These talks will help children know how the parent wants them to respond. Children are more likely to handle a situation well if they understand the reason for the response.

Be sure your emergency phone numbers are posted by each house phone. (If using a cell phone be sure that emergency numbers are in its phone book.) The child needs to be able to easily find emergency numbers and remain calm while placing the call. A copy of these numbers can be given to the trusted neighbor or contact person.

Here are seven situations to start your talks. Practice or role-play the child handling these situations. You will want to add more "What would you do if…?" situations that are specific to your family.

1. **You are making toast. The toast gets stuck and catches on fire. The toaster is near the curtains, and they catch on fire, too.**

   Is this an emergency? Yes No

   What do you do? _____

   Whom do you call? _____

   From where? _____

2. **You fall against a sharp table corner and get a bad cut on your knee. It is bleeding a lot.**

   Is this an emergency? Yes No

   What do you do? _____

   Whom do you call? _____

   From where? _____

3. **Your brother falls down the stairs; he does not move or answer when you talk to him.**

   Is this an emergency? Yes No

   What do you do? _____

   Whom do you call? _____

   From where? _____

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4. You come home after school and see that the front door to your house is open.

Is this an emergency? Yes No

What do you do? _____

Whom do you call? _____

From where? _____

5. You are putting away the dishes. A glass drops and breaks on the floor.

Is this an emergency? Yes No

What do you do? _____

Whom do you call? _____

From where? _____

6. A bad storm starts. Suddenly the lights go out.

Is this an emergency? Yes No

What do you do? _____

Whom do you call? _____

From where? _____

7. The phone rings. When you answer it, someone starts saying bad things.

Is this an emergency? Yes No

What do you do? _____

Whom do you call? _____

From where? _____

Recommended answers:

1. **Yes.** Call the fire department or 911 from a neighbor's. (Specify which neighbor.)
2. **Maybe.** Cover with a clean cloth and press firmly. Call a parent or your doctor if the bleeding won't stop. If the cut is gushing blood, call an ambulance or 911 from your home phone.
3. **Yes.** Call an ambulance or 911 from your home phone.
4. **Yes.** Call the police or 911 from a neighbor's house. (Specify which neighbor.)
5. **No.** Put on your shoes and sweep up all the glass; don't pick it up.
6. **No.** Get a flashlight and tune a portable radio to a station that is reporting the weather. Move to a safe place if conditions threaten or you hear a tornado siren. Do not use the phone during an electrical storm (i.e., if there is thunder and lightning).
7. **No**….unless the calls persist. Hang up immediately. If the person calls again, call a parent from your home phone.