B3885-01

home alone

READINESS
FOR PARENTS

Is your family ready for self-care?

At some point during each child's development, families start to think about letting children supervise themselves. Self-care can be a rewarding experience for children who are ready for it. It can help them develop independence, responsibility, and self-confidence. But if a child is not ready, self-care can be frightening and dangerous.

There is no magic age at which children develop the maturity and good sense needed to stay alone. But there are some signs that show a child may be ready.

For parents

Three important questions can help parents decide when a child is ready:

- Do you think your child is ready?
- How safe are your house or apartment and neighborhood?
- Does your child think he or she is ready?

You must also ask yourself whether you are ready to take this important step with your child.

Is your child ready?

Some signs that your child is ready for self-care:

- Your child indicates desire and willingness to stay alone.
- Your child accepts responsibility and makes decisions. For example, your child will follow your written directions for chores that need to be done while you are away.
- Your child shows awareness of what others need.
- For many children, these abilities can appear between 9 and 12 years of age. Other children need more time.

UW Extension
University of Wisconsin-Extension