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Family Keys

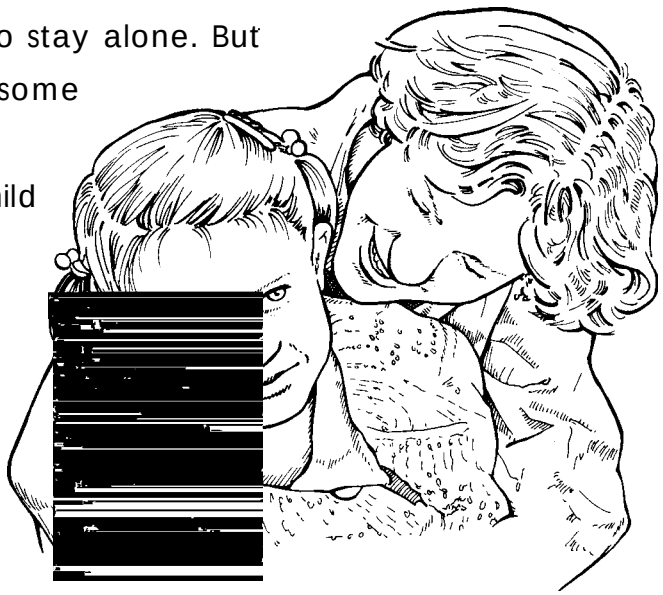
Self-Care Resources for Children & Their Families

Ready for Self-Care?

1 KEY

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

Key 1 asks three important questions to help parents decide when a child is ready:

1. How safe are your house or apartment and neighborhood?
2. Do you think your child is ready?
3. Does your child think he or she is ready?

You must also ask yourself whether you are ready.

Are you 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 to 12 years of age. Other children need more time.

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For parents:
Are you ready?
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1
KEY

Ready for Self-Care? asks a lot of questions. Most families have some "yeses," some "nos" and some "maybes." Most important is that you talk about self-care and decide together if you and your child are ready. Other *Family Keys* help prepare children for self-care – rules, phone skills, first aid, fire safety, personal safety, coping with fear, loneliness and boredom, getting along with brothers and sisters, kitchen and food safety, nutrition, and building self-confidence and family strengths.

Can you answer yes to these questions?

Check ✓

- ❑ Yes ❑ No **1.** Do you feel your child is mature enough to handle the responsibilities of being alone?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **2.** Do you and your child communicate well about feelings?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **3.** Can you trust your child to tell you if something goes wrong in self-care?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **4.** Does your child follow family rules and directions well?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **5.** Does your child show resourcefulness by being able to find something useful and interesting to do?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **6.** Have you talked with your child about self-care?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **7.** Is your child interested in self-care?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **8.** Is your child confident about self-care?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **9.** Have you prepared your child and home for self-care?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **10.** Can you reach your child by phone and monitor a self-care trial situation?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **11.** Are you reliable? Do you come home on time?
- ❑ Yes ❑ No **12.** Can you be reached in an emergency?

If you answered mostly yes, you will probably want to read pages 2 and 3. If you answered mostly no, you may want to put these materials away for a later time, and continue to provide direct supervision for your child for now.

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Authors: Jill Steinberg, associate specialist, Center for Action on the Family, University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW-Extension; David Riley, professor, Child & Family Studies, UW-Madison and UW-Extension; Cheryl Rew Stapleton, Columbia County family living agent, and Ann Keim, volunteer development specialist, UW-Extension.

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