



LEAVING CHILDREN HOME ALONE

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO LEAVE A CHILD AT HOME ALONE?

The Canada Safety Council (CSC) recommends a minimum age of 10 years old with consideration given to the child's temperament, if they feel prepared and to the level of preparation to which the guardian/parent has prepared the child.

When it comes to watching siblings or other people's children, the CSC recommends a babysitter be a minimum age of 12 years old.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS TO ASK

1. Does the child feel comfortable about being home alone?
2. Do you feel comfortable about the child being home alone?
3. Can you trust the child to follow directions and does he/she understand and remember instructions whether written or oral?
4. Can the child handle normal and unexpected situations?
5. Are you able to communicate readily with him or her when you are not at home?
6. Can the child always reach someone to help in case of an emergency?

When leaving a child at home alone, ensure that they are in a safe and comfortable environment where they have information on how to contact an adult, the police or poison control.

IF YOU DECIDE TO LEAVE A CHILD HOME ALONE

- Prepare the child to deal with situations that may arise, such as what to do if someone comes to the door.
- Specify how his or her time is to be spent. Set firm rules with clear do's and don'ts.
- Keep in touch - make sure you are reachable by cell phone.
- Make sure the home is safe and secure.
- Limit the time the child is left home alone.
- Remember, a child who may be ready to care for him/herself for a short period of time may not be able to care for younger siblings or other children.

