

## Safety While Your Child's Alone

Working parents- and that's the majority of American families today- share the anxiety, frustration, and even fear involved in leaving children "on their own" when school lets out, child care arrangements with neighbors and relatives break down, or there simply are not any alternatives.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Make sure your children are ready to care for themselves.
- Teach them basic safety rules.
- Know where your kids are, what they are doing, and who they are with.

### ARE THEY READY? CAN YOUR CHILDREN-

- Be trusted to go straight home after school?
- Easily use the telephone, locks, and kitchen appliances?
- Follow rules and instructions well?
- Handle unexpected situations without panicking?
- Stay home alone without being afraid?

Talk it over with them, and listen to their worries and ideas. Work out rules on having friends over, household chores, homework, and television. Remember, staying at home alone can build a child's self esteem, sense of responsibility, and practical skills.

### TEACH YOUR "HOME ALONE" CHILDREN

- How to call 9-1-1 or your area's emergency number, or call the operator.
- How to give directions to your house in case of an emergency.
- To check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home.
- To never accept gifts or rides from people they don't know well. **(And you approve of!)**
- How to use the door, windows, locks and the alarm system if you have one.
- To never let anyone into the home without asking your permission.
- To never let a caller at the door or on the phone know they are alone.
- To carry a house key with them in a safe place (inside a shirt pocket or sock)-do not leave it under a mat or on a ledge.
- How to escape in case of fire.
- To not go into the house or apartment if things do not look right- a broken window, ripped screen, or opened door.
- To let you know about anything that frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable.