



Grandparents Corner

June 2018

Staying Home

When Are Children Ready to Stay Home Alone?

If you work outside the home, you know that finding summer day care can be a real challenge. Or, if the grandchildren are older, you may wonder if it's safe to leave them alone - even for short periods of time while you run errands. The kids may argue that they are old enough to stay alone while you work. Unfortunately, there is no magic age at which children develop the maturity and good sense needed to stay alone.

Before you consider self-care, discuss these safety concerns with your grandchild:

- Does the child feel confident about being alone?
- Is there help close by?
- Does the child know how to safely answer the phone and door while alone?
- Is the child able to make an emergency phone call?
- Are important phone numbers posted near the telephone?
- Does the child understand your rules and expectations about friends coming to the house, use of free time, phone use, and other house rules?
- Does the child know how to operate household equipment?
- Does the child know basic first aid?

Children who can answer "yes" to these questions and demonstrate the skills needed may be ready to stay alone on a trial basis. If they are not ready for self-care, start discussing and practicing these safety procedures now so that the children are ready to stay alone when the need arises.

Make Sure Children Understand Who a Stranger Is

Children often think that a stranger is someone they have never seen before, or someone who looks mean or unfriendly. Unfortunately, most individuals who try to harm children appear kind and friendly. The person may even be someone the child knows. So, we need to help children distinguish between total strangers, familiar strangers, and trusted family and friends. A total stranger is someone the child has never seen before. A familiar stranger is someone the child has seen but does not know well - like the cashier at the grocery store. Trusted family and friends are people whom you would invite into your home.

Who's Calling?

When grandchildren are home alone, the phone can be a source of comfort and reassurance. In an emergency, the telephone can bring immediate help. But, the telephone can also be a source of danger if children do not safely respond to phone calls. If you have an answering machine or caller ID, encourage your grandchildren to screen calls before answering them. Otherwise, share the following safety tips:

- Begin by only saying "Hello." Never answer the phone by giving your name.
- Never tell a stranger that you are alone or that your grandparents are not home.
- If a stranger asks to speak to your grandparents, say that they are busy and cannot come to the phone.
- Never give any information about you or your family.
- Offer to take a message.

Who's There?

A knock on the door when a grandchild is home alone can be a frightening moment. Children need to remain calm and realize that most people who approach the house do not intend to harm them. When children are home alone, you may want to instruct them not to answer the door at all. But if you do expect them to answer the door, instruct your grandchild to:

- Identify who is at the door. Without opening the door, ask, "Who is it?"
- Never open the door to a stranger.
- Never tell a stranger that you are alone or that your grandparents are not home.
- If a stranger asks to speak to your grandparents, say that they are busy and cannot come to the door.
- Never give any information about you or your family.
- Offer to take a message.

Source: University of Wisconsin - www.uwex.edu

Body mechanics involve standing and moving one's body so as to prevent injury, avoid fatigue, and make the best use of strength. When you learn how to control and balance your own body, you can safely control and move another person. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. *During transfers, people may feel more vulnerable and may resist out of fear or not knowing where they are going. T F*
2. *A study found that patients with severe back pain who quit smoking report less pain and greater improvement than patients who continued to smoke. T F*
3. *Excess weight places extra stress on back and stomach muscles and joints. T F*
4. *Many back injuries occur when lifting, moving, transferring, or changing the position of the one in your care. T F*
5. *Entering or exiting a vehicle is not dangerous for a senior and cannot cause a fall. T F*
6. *In dementia care, fear and confusion are often the cause of resistance. T F*
7. *If, during a transfer, you start to "lose" the person, do not try to hold them up. Doing so will probably result in injury. T F*
8. *If a senior does not move often, they may become lightheaded with a change in position. T F*
9. *Pull the person out of the chair to get them up. T F*
10. *Obesity is one of the biggest risk factors for developing back pain. Losing weight—even just 10 or 11 pounds—can cut your risk in half. T F*

KEY: 1. T 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. F 6. T 7. T 8. T 9. F 10. T