

# LATCHKEY KIDS A PARENT'S GUIDE



Nowadays, both parents working is the norm rather than an oddity. If the parents work until 5, and the children get out of school a couple of hours earlier, then the children either have to go to a sitter, an after-school day care, or be alone at home. If your child or children are latchkey kids, you worry about what might be happening when they are home alone. The following are some safety tips to help ease parents' worry and to keep latchkey kids safe.

## 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 alone without being afraid?

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Make sure your children are old enough and mature enough to care for themselves.
- Teach them basic safety rules.
- Know the three "W's": Where your kids are, What they're doing, and Who they're with.

## TEACH YOUR "HOME ALONE" CHILDREN

To check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home.

How to call 9-1-1, or your area's emergency number, or call the operator.

How to give directions to your home, in case of emergency.

To never accept gifts or rides from people they don't know well.

How to use the door and window locks, and the alarm system if you have one.

To never let anyone into your home without asking your permission.

To never let a caller at the door or on the phone know that they're alone. Teach them to say "Mom can't come to the phone (or door) right now."

To carry a house key with them in a safe place (inside a shirt pocket or sock). Don't leave it under a mat or on a ledge outside the house.

How to escape in case of fire.

To not go into an empty house or apartment if things don't look right — a broken window, ripped screen, or opened door.

To let you know about anything that frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable.





**Keep These Important  
Numbers Near the  
Phone!**

Mom's or dad's work \_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor \_\_\_\_\_

Family friend who lives  
or works nearby \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Police \_\_\_\_\_

Fire department \_\_\_\_\_

Poison control center \_\_\_\_\_

Paramedics \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency help 9-1-1 or Operator

**A WORD ABOUT CURIOSITY...**

Are there things you don't want your children to get into? Take the time to talk to them about the deadly consequences of guns, medicines, power tools, drugs, alcohol, cleaning products, and inhalants. Make sure you keep these items in a secure place out of sight and locked up, if possible.

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