

Listed below are a variety of additional resources available to you.

Bright Start Responsive Parenting

This project is funded by the State of South Dakota Office of Child Care Services. This six-week series of classes is designed for parents that have children ages birth to three years. Classes cover a variety of topics including: discipline, temperament, and stress. Classes are FREE and child care may be available.

Infant/Child CPR

This program is designed to give parents, child care providers, and other adults information and skills on CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation). These classes are ongoing throughout the year.

Insight for Children

These classes are designed to give information about how children develop and why they do the things they do. Topics include sibling issues, temperament, and childhood behaviors. Classes vary in length and are FREE.

Temperament Project

This project is funded by the Sioux Empire United Way Success By Six Program. Services provided are FREE. Learning about temperament can help with discipline issues, behavior concerns, and social development. Individual temperament consultations are available, as well as temperament screenings.

Mutch Woman's Health Library

Various materials of interest to women are available for check-out at the Mutch Women's Center for Health Enrichment. Books, videos, and pamphlets cover a variety of topics including but not limited to: parenting, stress, and health information.

Being At Home Alone...



Sanford Children's C.H.I.L.D. Services
is located at:
1115 W. 41st Street, Sioux Falls, SD
(605) 333-0698



1305 W. 18th Street • PO Box 5039
Sioux Falls, SD 57117-5039
sanfordchildrens.org

BEING AT HOME ALONE

Children staying home alone is not a new dilemma in America. In fact, the term “Latchkey” came from the 19th century when children came home to an empty house and used a key to unlock the latch to their home. The decision to have your child stay home alone is, however, a very present dilemma for many parents.

Is My Child Ready?

It would be so easy if one could say, “Children are ready to stay home alone at age ____.” But as we know, all children are different and a variety of circumstances affect the decision of children being ready to stay alone. Your child’s maturity level, age, ability to handle responsibility, and attitude on being home alone are key factors in determining what is best for you and your family.

Communication is important. Talk openly with your child about common feelings associated with being home alone. Parents have common feelings of guilt, anxiety, concern for their child’s safety or problems with peers after school. Children often have feelings of being excited at first, then scared, bored, sad or lonely. Explain to your child that they may experience mixed emotions about staying home alone, and it is important to talk about them when they occur. If you have determined that your child is able to handle responsibility and is mature enough to stay home alone, establishing guidelines can help you and your child feel more self-confident. The following suggestions may be helpful when determining guidelines.

Helpful Suggestions:

- Before staying alone, have your child take an appropriate course in home alone safety.
- Begin by using a step process to staying home alone. To help your child “try out” staying home alone, give him or her the opportunity to stay home for 10-15 minutes while you run a short errand. When you return, talk to your child about how he or she felt while you were gone. If there is any sign of fear or anxiety,

your child may not be ready to stay home alone. This gradual process of 10 minutes growing into 1 hour and then 2 hours, is a way for children to deal with time alone. Generally, children below 8 years of age should not be left alone because they are easily frightened and lack important organizational skills.

- Develop overall safety plans for weather, fire, stranger danger, being locked out, losing a house key, and what to do in case of accidents. Be sure your child knows where the first aid kit is and how to use the supplies in it.
- Review with your child how to leave the house; lock the doors, windows, locks, etc.
- Make sure your child knows where to find all emergency phone numbers. Those numbers should include your work, relatives, neighbors, fire, ambulance and police numbers.
- Teach your child the safe way to answer the phone and the door.
 - Let the answering machine answer all calls and pick up the phone only if a parent is calling.
 - If you don’t have an answering machine, tell your child not to answer the phone or work out a system of two rings, hang-up and call again so the child will know to answer.
 - Opening the door to strangers can be very dangerous. Children should know they don’t need to answer the door when you are gone - they can pretend nobody is home.
- Don’t allow your child to swim when you are gone.
- Lock up firearms and other dangerous items.
- Agree on rules for snacks, homework, friends, television, etc. These rules must be clear, firm and fair.
- Help your child understand what nutritious snacks are and how to safely prepare them.

- Be realistic about your child’s responsibilities for getting supper ready, pet care, phone usage, etc. Taking care of themselves should be their first priority.
- Establish a schedule of consistent activities for your child; reading, computer, dance, painting, swimming lessons, homework, sewing, etc. Busy children will not become bored or lonely as easily.
- Develop a checklist for before school/after school items and leave them by the door. These items may include locking the door, turning off the lights, remembering their school lunch, homework, keys to the house, etc.
- Be sensitive and considerate to your child’s needs. Call if you will be coming home late--children worry too.
- Have a weekly family conference to discuss feelings, frustrations, and triumphs. Constant, open communication is very important.

For more information, call
Sanford Children’s C.H.I.L.D. Services
(605) 333-0698