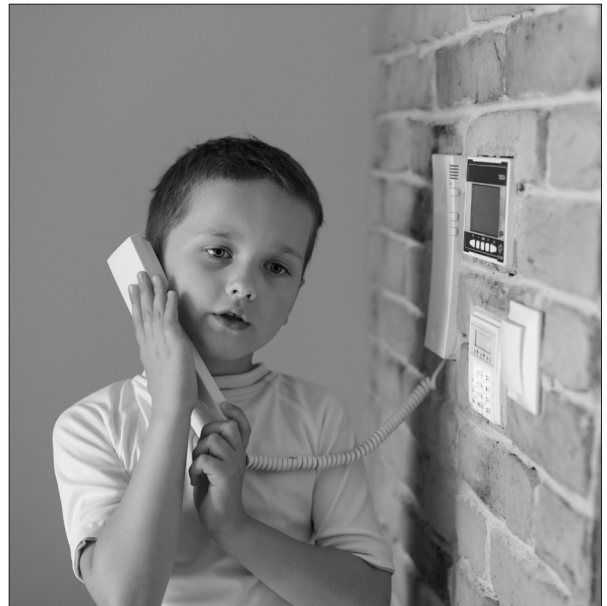


Home Alone

IS YOUR CHILD READY?

Deciding when your child is mature enough to stay home alone requires guidance from your brain, heart and instincts.

Virginia laws do not set a specific age for when a child legally can stay alone. Age alone is not the best indicator of a child's maturity level. Some very mature 10-year-olds may be ready for self care while some 15-year-olds may not be ready due to emotional problems or behavioral difficulties.



In determining whether a child is capable of being left alone and whether you are providing adequate supervision, you should consider these 10 questions:

- ▲ What is your child's level of maturity?
- ▲ Is he physically capable of taking care of himself?
- ▲ Is she mentally capable of recognizing and avoiding danger?
- ▲ Is your child emotionally ready to be alone?
- ▲ Does your child know what to do if an emergency arises?
- ▲ Can a parent or some other responsible adult be reached by phone and respond quickly?
- ▲ Does your son or daughter know where you are and how to reach you?
- ▲ What is a reasonable amount of time for a child to be left alone?
- ▲ Will your child be safe at home and in the neighborhood?
- ▲ Can you arrange for someone nearby to be available if a problem arises?

It is important to note that a child who can take care of himself or herself may not be ready to care for younger children.