

# PARENTS WHO HOST LOSE THE MOST™



Don't be  
a party to  
teenage  
drinking.

It's against  
the law.

Parents Who Host, Lose The Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking was developed by and is a project of Drug-Free Action Alliance

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## April is Alcohol Awareness month!

# Home Alone

## When is your child ready to be home alone?

### Did you Know?

The term "latchkey kid" was coined in the 1800s when children wore their house key around their necks on a string.

Today kids who are home alone are in "self care"

Experts estimate that from 5 to 12 million children between the ages of 5 and 13 are at home alone for some period of time every day

Looking for more information on Self-care? UW Extension offers a program called Family Keys that includes checklists and activities for families considering self-care. You can find it at <http://tinyurl.com/d6u67y> or contact Cynthia DiCamelli Family Resource Coordinator 835-4052 or [cad@oregonsd.org](mailto:cad@oregonsd.org)

Most parents think their 11 or 12 year old is ready to stay home alone after school, but as many as 1 in 10 third graders care for themselves after school and nearly 4 in 10 are cared for by an older sibling.

So, how do you know if your child is ready? **One thing to consider is your environment.**

- Is your home and neighborhood safe?
- Is there a neighbor nearby that your child can contact if there's an emergency?
- Also, does your home have working smoke detectors, and are your heating and electrical systems safe?
- Homes can have other hazards, too. Firearms, alcohol, chemicals, matches and poisons should be out of reach of children—under lock if possible.

Your child should be able to call you a neighbor or other trusted adult and 911 if there is an emergency. Post numbers next to the phone or program them into speed dial. And make sure your child clearly understands what really is an emergency!

**Both you and your child need to be ready for this step, too.**

- Consider whether your child is both mature enough to

handle the responsibilities of being home and resourceful enough to find something interesting, useful and safe to do. Is your child interested in doing this?

- Is your child is sometimes frightened to be alone in the house or would miss out on afterschool activities? If so, you may want to postpone the time for staying home alone.

If you and your child decide to try self-care, **it's important to create some rules to cover most situations.** Rules might include what activities are ok—homework, reading, or playing outside might be ok, but computer time, leaving the yard or having friends over are not. **Be specific!** "Be good" isn't very helpful, but "No playing outside until your homework is done" sets a clear expectation. House rules might also cover answering the phone or the door, too.

**Knowing a little basic first aid is a great skill to have, too.**

- Make sure your child can take care of a small cut, a nosebleed, a small burn and a large scrape or cut.
- Help them distinguish between something they can handle and when to call for emergency help.

- You and your child can make a first aid kit together and talk about how to use the items in it.
- Take advantage of community education classes in Babysitting and Basic Aid Training (BAT) for your child.

**Help your child create a plan for when they're by themselves with multiple activities so they won't get bored.** You might even help them make an afterschool schedule that includes snack time, homework, chores, music or sports practice and recreational activities like reading, TV or video games.

Most kids come home from school hungry. **Help your self-caring child chose nutritious snacks like fruit, vegetables or whole grain products.** As your child matures, you can add snacks that need some preparation like shakes or smoothies, or cooking like mini-pizzas or muffins.

**Ready to start? Don't plunge in too quickly! Start with short periods of time—** an day or two, or maybe a weekend afternoon, the progress to the full week. Think about how self-care is going and be prepared to change the arrangement if needed!