



## Home Alone After School



There's no "magic age" when a child is ready to be home alone. Rather, it's a matter of maturity, said Doniese Wilcox, Avera Certified Family Life Educator.

Consider past experiences:

- Does your child easily cry under stress?
- Can your child effectively come up with a solution when there's a problem?
- Has your child displayed good decision-making skills?
- Does your child follow through with responsibilities in general?

"It's OK to admit that your child may not be ready to stay home alone," said Wilcox, "but you can practice." Try leaving your child at home for an hour. Before parting, remind her of what to do in case of emergency. But don't put too much emphasis on the negative — you don't want to scare her! "Talk about the positives: your child will gain your trust and a bit more freedom with this added responsibility."

Safety reigns priority when children are trusted with staying home alone after school, meaning they have a general sense of what to do in case of fire, bad weather, ingestion of harmful substances or strangers roaming around the neighborhood.

"Make sure your child knows how to handle certain situations. Keep a list of important phone numbers visible on the kitchen fridge and explain when it's appropriate to call each one," said Wilcox. Kids should also memorize important numbers in case they have to leave home quickly and call at a safer location.

Practice what to do in case of fire or bad weather. When there's a fire, explain that it's most important to exit the house before calling the fire department from his cell phone or at a neighbor's house. Also, teach your child where to go in case there's a tornado or severe thunderstorm, such as under a basement stairway.

"It won't make the circumstances any less scary, but practicing how to handle situations like these will help your child gain confidence in managing the home while mom and dad are still at work."



## Healthy Ideas for Your Tailgate

Experts: Carri Lucas, RDN, LN, Avera Registered Dietitian and Debbie Lancto, Health and Wellness Champion, Avera Health Plans

Use vegetables — thinly sliced cucumbers and carrots — in place of chips. You can even dip them in salsa.

Make your own chips and salsa. Avoid the excess oil found in store-bought chips, and make your own tortilla chips to complement homemade salsa.

Try appetizer-sized portions of meat, such as serving bite-sized pieces of meat with toothpicks.

In recipes, substitute turkey or chicken for ground beef to cut back on fat.

Remember portion control. Make your own pre-portioned bags by placing individual portions of chips in small bags.

Have a snack before you leave or before guests arrive so you're less apt to overeat.

Make your own barbecue dry rub instead of sauce, saving you hidden calories and sugar.

Grill dessert, such as apricots, peaches and pineapple. Add cinnamon or brown sugar if you want!

## 5 Tips for Kids When Someone Has Breast Cancer

Someone your child cares about might be diagnosed with breast cancer. Perhaps it's his or her mother, grandma, aunt, teacher, neighbor, a friend's parent, etc. This experience can be scary — especially for a child.

Nancy Terveen, Breast Cancer Navigator, offers five tips to help children when someone they know has been diagnosed with cancer.

**Asking questions is OK.** "Sometimes when kids don't know what's going on, they become even more scared of the unknown," said Terveen. "Encourage them to ask questions, and answer at your discretion, even if it's an 'I don't know' answer."

**Discuss feelings.** Cancer brings out strong feelings, and it's important for family members to feel safe talking about them. Bottling up emotions can lead to harmful coping methods.

**Help out at home.** Cancer makes children feel helpless. Let them know that simply doing regular chores — taking out the garbage, feeding the dog or setting the table — helps the whole family.

**Try to be yourself.** Help your child maintain his or her regular routine. "The normalcy of going to soccer practices, eating meals together and hanging out with friends takes away some of the power cancer can hold over a family."

**Tell your child he or she didn't cause the cancer.** When something bad is happening in the family or community, kids feel personally responsible. "They feel that past situations, such as a fight, may have brought cancer to their loved one," said Terveen. "Assure them that they didn't cause the cancer."