

## Staying safe on their own.



### Home Alone

When your child is home alone, they should:

- Never open the door to anyone unless you have given them permission to do so.
- Never tell anyone (at the door or over the phone) that they are home alone. Depending on the age of the child, you might consider developing a code of rings or purchasing caller ID service so your child can know when it is safe to answer.
- Never disclose any personal information about themselves over the internet
- Know how to contact you (ie. by telephone, cell phone, email, work number, etc)
- Know all of their indentifying information such as their full name, your full name, and the home address (including city/town and country information)

### Online Safety

The Internet is a very valuable tool, but also can be a very dangerous place for child. These tips will help you and your child develop safe practices while surfing the Internet.

- **Awareness:** Place your home computer in a place where your child can be easily supervised, such as the living room or kitchen. Check out the sites your child is visiting. Let your child know that not all information on the Internet is true. A person your child talks to online may not be who they say they are.
- **Protection:** Warn your children not to give out personal information over the Internet, including their full name, address, photos or the school they attend. You could also check if there are any blocking features offered through your Internet service provider. There are online services and software available to filter out offensive material.
- **New Interest:** Tell your child that talking to a stranger on the Internet is the same as talking to one on the street. If your child begins placing phone calls to strangers or receives calls from unfamiliar people, investigate immediately. If your child decides to meet someone off the Internet, they must get your permission and meet him or her in a public place.
- **Guidance:** Talk as a family and come up with an agreement about Internet use. This should include sites that shouldn't be accessed and hours of use. Always let your child know that they can talk to you if someone is pressing them for personal information.
- **Danger:** Let your child know that they can talk to you or go to a teacher or trusted adult if someone has made them feel uncomfortable, said something inappropriate, is pressuring to meet them or has harassed them online. Immediately contact the police if your child gets sent sexually explicit material or has been sexually solicited.

For more information and tips, including a list of commom lures used by abductors, please visit our website at [www.mcsc.ca](http://www.mcsc.ca).



MISSING  
CHILDREN  
SOCIETY OF CANADA



National Head Office  
Suite 219, 3501 - 23 St NE  
Calgary, Alberta T2E 6V8  
Phone: 403.291.0705 Fax: 403.291.9728  
Email: [info@mcsc.ca](mailto:info@mcsc.ca)  
[www.mcsc.ca](http://www.mcsc.ca)

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**aware**

SAFETY TIPS  
FOR PARENTS

## Communication is key.



**The most effective tool in protecting your child is good communication.** All too often, parents avoid discussing dangers with their children because they:

- Are uncomfortable with the subject matter.
- Don't want to scare the child.
- Don't have a clear understanding of what the child should do to stay safe.

This pamphlet will provide you with some advice and tips to help keep your child safe.

### Know Your Child

- Keep an updated 'Personal Profile' of your child (see our Personal Profile pamphlet for more information). Your child's profile should include:
  - Current video and/or photographs of your child in a variety of poses and expressions.
  - Printed records of any medical conditions, required medications, and current dental records.
  - Fingerprints and/or DNA kit
- Know your child's friends and their families. Get to know their names, their addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- Before you allow your child to go to the home of one of their friends, you should learn who lives in the house or visits frequently.
- Before you allow your child to stay for the weekend at a friend's home you should know who will be caring for the child. You should familiarize yourself with the area so you know how to get there or how give directions to another party if necessary.
- Familiarize yourself with your child's schedule. Know where and how they spend their day.
- Know your child's preferred route to school, playground, store, etc.
- Ensure your child knows they can call you at any time if plans have changed or if they need you to pick them up.
- Get to know the child's teachers and any clubs they might belong to.
- Make sure schools, daycares, babysitters, etc., have updated relevant information on you including pick-up person, contact information, current address, vacations planned, etc.
- Do a background check on babysitters, daycares, after school programs, camps, etc., before registering your child.

**Your child's safety depends on you and your child feeling comfortable talking about anything.** Reinforce to your child that you love them and you would never leave them. Encourage them to tell you about anything unusual that someone may tell them.



## Knowledge is power.

**You should know that stranger abductions are very rare.** There were only 50 reported cases of stranger abduction in Canada in 2009. However, these and other dangerous situations exist. You should teach your child to recognize dangerous situations, and arm them with the following tools to avoid or effectively respond to them.

- Establish a very specific list of people your child has permission to go with or get rides from. (ie. family members, babysitter, etc.)
- Establish a password or secret code system. Teach your child that if someone other than yourself comes to pick them up, the person must know the password. If the person cannot repeat the password to your child, the child should refuse to go with them and go immediately to the nearest trusted adult. (Note that once the password has been used outside of your family, a new password should be initiated)
- Whenever possible, you should inform all concerned parties that someone else will be picking up your child. If the child is at school, call the office and tell them who will be picking up your child.
- Tell your child that under no circumstances are they to enter someone's home, enter someone's vehicle, or go with someone unless they have received your permission to do so or the person has given your child the password.
- Establish a list of people your child is allowed to approach for help (ie. teachers, police, neighbours, block parents, store clerk, etc.) Instruct your child that they still must never enter the homes or vehicles of these people unless they have been given your permission to do so.
- Establish a plan of action for your child for various scenarios. For example, you may teach your child that if they are separated from you at the shopping mall they can seek assistance from a store clerk, an information booth, a security guard, etc.
- On family outings, establish a pre-arranged meeting area in the event that you and your child become separated.
- Periodically quiz your child on different scenarios of potentially dangerous situations, the different lures that predators might use to gain their trust, and effective responses.
- As soon as they can learn it, your child should know their full name, address, and phone number. Practice talking to the operator, making collect calls, using a pay phone, calling 911, etc. Older children should know how to contact you at all times.
- Teach your children that if someone they don't know calls them by name, they should stay away from them. The person may have heard someone else call the child by name or seen the child's name on a binder or back pack.
- Encourage your child to use the buddy system and avoid poorly lit, isolated areas.
- Never leave your child alone. Attend your children, especially if they are younger, to the washroom, and don't let them wander around alone in a mall, on a beach, etc.
- Make sure your child understands that it is okay to say "no" when they feel threatened or uncomfortable. They should know that it is also OK to say no to an adult.
- Teach your children how to draw attention to themselves by yelling, kicking, and fighting back when they are in danger or feel threatened. Teach the child to shout help, this is not my parent, I'm being abducted, etc.
- Make sure your children always inform you of where they will be, who they will be with, the address and phone number where they can be reached, etc.