



CONGRATS! YOU'RE A TEENAGER. SAFETY TIPS FOR TEENS

Congrats! You're a teenager! Almost an adult and ready to try new things and have new experiences.



The buddy system is still very very important. It may be exciting to do things alone but it's never a very good idea. Take a friend with you as you go out to explore, go to school, to the mall or anywhere else. After all, things are always more fun with another person!

Talking with strangers becomes more of a daily task instead of something to be avoided. Working at a job and doing more things on your own all involve interaction with people we've never met or hardly know. While the childhood admonition to "Never talk to strangers!" doesn't apply anymore, it's still important to be cautious. Keep your distance. Don't let someone coax you into a corner or a tight space to talk. Trust your judgment. If someone seems a bit "off" or something doesn't seem right, remove yourself from the situation.

Develop good street smarts and always be alert as to who is around you and what they're doing. When walking, walk on the side of the road opposite traffic. This way you can see cars coming and can move away quickly if a car pulls over. Stay an arms reach away from anyone that approaches you and don't be afraid to yell, scream and run if they try to grab you. Keep the volume on your MP3 player turned down low enough so that you can hear footsteps or an approaching vehicle. Don't carry expensive items where other people can see them and make you a target. Carry mace or pepper spray. If you have your driver's license, always look around the car before you approach. Get your keys out and have them ready to immediately start the car. If anything seems wrong with the car or there's someone you don't know watching at a close distance, turn around and walk away.

Finding a policeman or woman is often the best way of getting immediate help if a stranger has approached you in an inappropriate way. Give them your information and everything you can remember about the stranger (Remember that buddy system? This is where that extra pair



of eyes is helpful.) If you can't find a cop, use your cell phone and call 911. If you don't have a cell phone, go to the nearest payphone and dial 911. It doesn't cost anything to make an emergency call. Tell the 911 operator your situation and give them your info and a description of the stranger. Stay on the phone until they tell you it's alright to hang up.

Communication with the adults in your life as you become more independent is very very important. Be sure to tell your parents or guardian where you're going, who you're going with and when you'll be back. If you have a cell phone, always keep it charged and in your coat or pants pocket. It's better to keep a phone in easy reach than shoved into the bottom of your book bag or backpack where you have to stop and dig to get it out. If your plans change or something happens, call your parents and let them know. It may feel annoying and like you're a little kid but if anything were to happen where you couldn't get home, they will know that something is wrong and try to help.

Remember talking about "good" secrets and "bad" secrets when you were little? While you're old enough now to know better if a secret is good or bad, it's still important to tell your parents about the bad secrets. Even if it will make someone angry, if it hurts you to keep a secret, then it's a secret that needs to be told.

Being home alone can be fun. Watching movies or eating the secret stash of cookies you're not supposed to know about. But what if someone comes to the door or calls asking for your parents? If someone comes to the door that you don't recognize, it's best to keep the door shut and either not answer it or ask through the door who they are and what they want. If they don't answer or try to open the door, keep the door locked and immediately call 911. Phone calls are a little easier. Never say that your parents aren't home and take a message. If there's no one on the other line or someone makes inappropriate noises or comments, hang up.



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