

The Sleep Over—Questions Parents Should Ask

First it's playdates, next thing you know, it's sleepovers. For those of us who have been there, the thought of your child spending the night at someone else's home can produce some anxiety. As parents, we won't be there to watch over them, make sure they're safe, and help them if they wake up in the middle of the night with a stomachache. To ease your mind and ensure your child's safety when attending a sleepover, questions to ask include:

1. **Do you know the parents well enough to trust them with your child's safety?** Make sure you are completely comfortable with the parents.
2. **Are there going to be adults and teenagers in the home that you don't know?** Make sure you and your child feel comfortable with any extended family or additional visitors that are present.
3. **Will the children be home alone at anytime during the sleepover?**
4. **What are the sleeping arrangements?** Will the kids be by themselves in a bedroom? Sharing a room with a sibling?
5. **Will the sleepover include other children?** If so, who are the other kids that will be at the sleepover?
6. **What is the agenda?** Will the kids spend most of the time watching movies and playing video games? Also, share with the parent any restrictions that you have with your children regarding maturity level of movies and video games.
7. **Are the kids going to be leaving the home?** If so, will they be supervised? Are the proper car restraints available?
8. **Is there a gun in the home?** According to a Rand report, 34 percent of children in the U.S. live in a home with at least one firearm, 69 percent of homes with firearms and children, more than one firearm is present. ***In 9 percent of homes with guns and children, at least one weapon is stored unlocked and loaded.***
9. **Is someone keeping an eye on the Internet making sure that the children are visiting age-appropriate sites, being good cybercitizens, and avoiding chat rooms?**
10. **Are there drugs and alcohol within reach?** According to Foundation for a Drug-Free World, every day in the U.S., 2,500 youth (12 to 17) abuse a prescription pain reliever for the first time.

