

The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

IS MY CHILD SAFE?

Working With Your Child Care Program to Protect Your Child

It's natural to worry. Young children's energy and curiosity can bring them into contact with safety hazards every day. You take steps to childproof your home. You know that young children need constant supervision.

Pay attention to health and safety issues when you choose child care. Once you begin child care, work with your child care provider to make health and safety a priority.

Quick Tips - Safety

Hand washing: Every child gets sick occasionally. You may be surprised to learn that the primary recommendation for reducing infection and illness is very simple – wash your hands! Frequent handwashing is the most effective defense against illness and the spread of germs at home and in child care. You, your child and child care providers should wash hands:

- ▶ **When** arriving at child care.
- ▶ **Before** preparing food or bottles, meals or snacks, giving medications or first aid

- ▶ **After** using the bathroom, diapering, coughing or sneezing, or administering first aid

Some child care centers and family child care providers teach children to cough into the crook of the arm so germs are not transferred onto the hands.



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Indoor Safety: Watch indoor spaces for the following potential problems:

- ▶ Potential poisons, cleaning solutions, etc.
- ▶ Broken toys
- ▶ Open doors or windows
- ▶ Wet or slippery floors
- ▶ Clutter that could trip a child
- ▶ Sharp objects (scissors, knives)
- ▶ Open containers of water
- ▶ Exposed electrical outlets or cords
- ▶ Small items that could present a choking hazard
- ▶ Non-secured TV or video equipment on moveable carts

If you see a hazard, ask your child care provider how you can help fix it.

Outdoor Safety: Children need and enjoy outdoor time every day. Outdoor play space should include the following:

- ▶ Soft surface beneath play structures
- ▶ Equipment that is sturdy, well maintained and free of splinters
- ▶ Good adult supervision
- ▶ Fenced-in area protected from the street
- ▶ Outdoor toys in good condition
- ▶ Helmets for children who use tricycles, bikes, roller skates or scooters
- ▶ In winter, check for icy surfaces or sharp icicles

Transportation: Injuries are more likely to occur during the times when a child's surroundings or routine changes.

- ▶ If your child is transported in a car or van, make sure your child care provider knows how to correctly install car seats and uses them every time your child is in the vehicle
- ▶ If your child rides a school bus, ask about seat belts and safety rules
- ▶ Make sure your child wears the safety belt in the stroller
- ▶ Make sure your child care program has a policy for ensuring no children are left in a vehicle at the end of a trip

Crib Safety: Cribs should be used properly and according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

- ▶ Cribs should have no corner posts; slats should be 2-3/8 inches apart or less; and mattresses should be snug-fitting
- ▶ Make sure your child cannot climb out of the crib
- ▶ Be sure there are no dangling cords near the crib
- ▶ Toys should not be hung across the cribs of infants who can sit up

Bedding: Lice infestation, scabies, and ringworm and other diseases can be spread through bedding materials.

- ▶ Your child's sheets and blankets should be washed weekly or more often if needed
- ▶ Your child's bedding should always be kept separate from other children's bedding

Cleaning Tips

- ▶ Wash plastic toys at least once a day in a dishwasher or with disinfectant
- ▶ Wash toys that have been in a child's mouth before they are used by another child
- ▶ Disinfect tabletops and diaper areas after each use
- ▶ If anyone has a cold, wash toys and hands more often



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Tummy troubles: Stomach ailments are common in young children. Children in child care may get diarrhea more often than children cared for at home. Children with vomiting, diarrhea and/or fever should be kept away from other children in the child care setting. Wash hands more often when illness is present.

Lice, pinworm and rashes: No one likes to talk about them, but lice, pinworm and impetigo are common in child care and schools across the country. Although they rarely pose a health threat, they are unpleasant and can be hard to control. These conditions spread quickly because of the way children play together - head to head or hand in hand.

- ▶ If there is an outbreak in child care, check your child carefully
- ▶ Teach children that some stuffed animals, hats and blankets are not shared
- ▶ If you find signs of lice, pinworms or a rash, act promptly
- ▶ Inform your child care provider and find out when your child can return to care

Safety issues at each stage of development

Infants

- ▶ **Shaken Baby Syndrome:** A baby's neck is too weak to support the weight of his head, so if he is shaken he is at risk for serious injury and even death. Babies under the age of 6 months are most vulnerable, but children up to the age of 2 years can still be injured. Discuss the risks of shaking a young child with your child care provider so that she knows never to do it.
- ▶ **Sleeping Positions:** Doctors now advise parents to place infants on their backs to sleep in order to reduce the



risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (also known as SIDS). Crib bumpers, pillows and stuffed animals should be removed from cribs to avoid any risk of suffocation.

Toddlers

- ▶ **Toddler-Proofing:** As babies begin to crawl and walk, their world expands. As your child grows, ask your child care provider for advice and tips on childproofing. Note special measures that she has taken such as corner guards, child-proof locks on cabinets or safety covers for electrical outlets.
- ▶ **Choke Hazards:** Young children explore objects by putting them in their mouths and are therefore at a high risk for choking. Check at home and at child care for small toys. Your child care provider should have training in CPR and the Heimlich maneuver for infants and young children.



Preschoolers and Older Children

- ▶ **Safety Education:** As children grow, they can learn simple safety practices, such as how to dial "911" in an emergency. Teach them to wear a helmet and safety gear when roller skating or riding a bike and make sure your child care program enforces this practice.
- ▶ Talk with your child about "good and bad" touching, and give him basic rules about talking to strangers and never getting into a stranger's car. Find out how your child care program is talking with your child about these issues.
- ▶ **Emergencies:** If an emergency occurs, your child could be at home, child care or school. Find out what safety issues are covered in child care and at school, and reinforce these concepts at home. Be sure your child understands what do.

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For More Information

- ▶ **American Academy of Pediatrics**, www.aap.org/healthtopics/childcare.cfm, covers child care topics of interest to parents of children of all ages.
- ▶ **Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care**, <http://nrckids.org/CFOC/PDFVersion/National%20Health%20>

and%20Safety%20Performance%20Standards.pdf, from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, lists national health and safety standards for child care programs in an easy-to-understand format.

- ▶ **Is This the Right Place for My Child? 38 Research-Based Indicators for High-Quality Child Care**, www.naccrra.org/parent/quality_indicators.php, by NACCRRRA, was created as a guide for parents to help them better judge quality when considering child care programs. All of the questions are based on research about what is important to your child's health, safety, and development.

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225 Long Avenue
Hillside, NJ 07205
973-923-1433
www.cccunion.org

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