

Starting Baby Out on the Road to Good Health

“Wash your hands before you hold the baby!” might sound like the words of a paranoid first-time parent, but it’s truly good advice. Infants are susceptible to infection before the age of 3 months, and a few easy precautions can keep your child from getting sick.

- Get the proper immunizations and preventive care.
- Keep infants under 3 months old away from adults and children who are sick.
- Avoid crowded places, such as shopping malls and grocery stores.
- Ask your child care center how it prevents the spread of infectious diseases.

Follow the “Back to Sleep” Rule



- Medical researchers still do not know exactly what causes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). But the evidence points toward sleeping on the stomach as a possible cause. To be safe, always put your baby to sleep on his or her back.

Caregivers Need Support Too

As a parent or caregiver for a child, you probably spend most of your energy keeping your child safe and preparing him or her for the big, wide world. But who takes care of you? Parenting is a hard job and one that you shouldn’t do alone. Seek the support you need, and be sure to take time for yourself. You’ll be a better parent for it. **Ideas:**

Join a play group.

It’s a good way for your child to learn social skills, and it will introduce you to fellow parents who can provide support.



Find out if your local hospital offers parenting classes or parent support groups.

You’ll meet others who are undergoing the same challenges.

Join the parents’ organization at your child’s school.

Final thought: Bringing home a new baby is a happy experience — and a stressful one. New parents often suffer from lack of sleep and feelings of worry and isolation. Don’t be afraid to ask friends and family for help and support. By following the tips in this brochure and taking care of yourself, you’ll be giving your child a healthy and safe start in life.

Child Care

A Guide for Healthy Kids, Happy Parents



Keep Your Child Healthy and Safe

Parenting is hard work and often filled with worry: How do you know you're doing the best for your child's health and well-being? Read on to find out how to protect your child's health and safety.

Childproof Your Home

Use these household safety tips to help keep your child safe and sound:

- ✓ Lock up household cleaners, cosmetics, medications and sharp objects.
- ✓ Set the hot water heater thermostat to below 120 degrees.
- ✓ Keep garbage bags, plastic wraps, grocery bags and other plastics out of a child's reach.
- ✓ Install a locking device on the toilet lid, and never leave a child unattended in the tub (a child can drown in just a few inches of water).
- ✓ Install child safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- ✓ Tie up window blind cords, long electrical cords and phone cords with clothespins or cord clips.
- ✓ Cover unused electrical outlets with safety caps.
- ✓ Use protective padding on furniture with sharp edges.
- ✓ Get a crib mattress that fits the crib snugly, and keep the crib free of large stuffed animals and pillows.
- ✓ Keep houseplants out of a child's reach.
- ✓ Screen radiators and baseboard heaters.
- ✓ Install safety bars on upper-story windows.

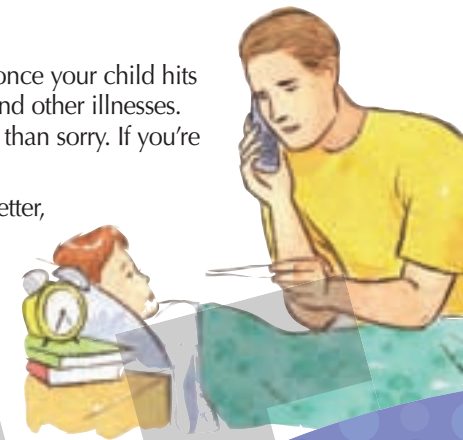
Post important numbers — poison control, your pediatrician and a local emergency number — near every telephone in your home.



When to Call Your Child's Doctor

Babies will come down with an average of six infections during their first year — and once your child hits day care or school, he or she will be regularly exposed to upper respiratory infections and other illnesses. Parents are often unsure of when to call the pediatrician. **The bottom line:** Better safe than sorry. If you're concerned about your child's symptoms or behavior, call the doctor.

When you call, be sure to note when the symptoms started, if they've gotten worse or better, whether your baby has been exposed to someone who is ill and whether your baby has a history of any medical problems. Also tell the doctor if your baby has any other worrisome symptoms, such as a rash, trouble breathing or behavior changes. The more information you can give, the better the doctor will be able to help.



Call the Doctor if Your Child:

- Has a fever over 100.2 degrees
- Refuses to eat or drink
- Is breathing rapidly or with difficulty
- Has prolonged coughing or vomiting
- Has loose stools or stools mixed with mucus or blood
- Has signs of dehydration such as sunken eyes, no tears, dry mouth, or little or no urine for eight hours
- Is drooling or unable to swallow
- Is lethargic or listless
- Cries continuously
- Has unexplained skin rash

Could Child Care Give Your Child an Advantage?

If your child spends significant time with a child care provider, you may worry that he or she is missing out on advantages provided by spending more time at home with you. True, nothing takes the place of a parent's care, but studies that have followed children as far as the second grade are encouraging.

Research shows that children who have spent time in day care may actually be more intellectually prepared for school than those who didn't. Children who spend time in a good-quality child care setting learn independence and social skills early that will put them in good standing once they head off to school.

Don't worry too much about your child becoming attached to the caregiver or failing to learn skills and values from you, the parent. Studies show that children still learn their most important life skills at home. Instead, find ways to spend quality time as a family when you can.

Choosing a Babysitter

You're finally heading out for a little well-deserved time to yourself. But perhaps the thought of leaving your child with a sitter makes it hard for you to relax. Put your mind at ease by conducting a thorough interview with the person you're considering to watch your child. Questions to ask:

- 1 Have you taken a babysitting or first aid course? Do you know child CPR?
- 2 How much child care experience do you have? (Ask specifics: How old were the children? Were they younger brothers and sisters or someone else's? How often did you watch them?)
- 3 What would you do to keep my child safe and happy while I'm away?
- 4 How would you handle my child throwing a tantrum or refusing to do what you asked?
- 5 What's the most difficult situation you've had while babysitting, and how did you handle it?

DON'T FORGET: Ask for references, and let the potential sitter meet your child at the end of the interview so you can see how they get along.

