



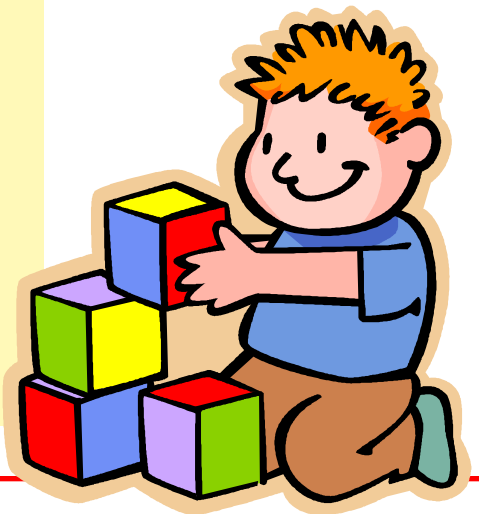
Safe Food for Babies and Children: A Guide for Babysitters

- PARENT EDITION -

As a parent, you most likely will need a babysitter to look after your children at some time. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to foodborne illness, and even a small error in food preparation can cause severe illness. Making sure your babysitter is prepared to provide care safely will assure a positive experience for both you and your sitter.

Selecting a Sitter

A number of child-care experts agree that babysitters should be at least 13 years old; however, when selecting a sitter, consider both age and maturity. Interview the potential babysitter in person. The sitter must be comfortable around children and possess basic child-care skills. The sitter should have access to a responsible adult in case of emergency and should know how and when to request help. Many babysitters have references from other families for whom they have worked. You may want to check out their references to learn more about their attitude, skills and responsibility. Also ask if the sitter has completed a babysitter certification course.



Contact Information

List emergency information and specific instructions for your sitter in a handy location, such as the refrigerator door. Be sure to include the following:

- A phone number where you can be reached.
- Phone numbers for emergency services (police, fire department and poison control).
- Your name, home address and home phone number.

Instructions for Sitter

With a new sitter, it's important to familiarize them with some information, such as the following:

- Location of first aid and other supplies.
- Specific cooking instructions and location of equipment and utensils.
- When and how to put the child down for a nap.
- If you have a baby, provide this information:
 - Instructions for preparing bottles and baby food.
 - Instructions on how to hold, feed and burp the baby.
 - Instructions on diaper changing and location of supplies.

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Food Safety Tips

Since infants and young children especially are vulnerable to foodborne illness, reinforce safe food handling practices if you are asking your sitter to prepare or serve meals or snacks:

- Hand washing is important! Remind your sitter to wash with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, before feeding infants and children, after changing diapers and after using the restroom.
- Wash eating areas with warm, soapy water.
- Keep perishable foods in the refrigerator.
- Watch infants and young children when they are eating. Eating while walking, running or laughing may lead to choking.
- Avoid feeding children less than 5 years old any food that is small, round and hard, such as hot dogs, whole grapes, candy, popcorn, peanuts, raw carrots, fruit seeds, apple chunks and gum. For more information on choking, see the NDSU Extension Service publication “Safe Food for Infants and Children: Choking Dangers.”
- Keep dish soap, laundry detergent and other household cleaning supplies out of children’s reach to avoid accidental poisoning.

Kitchen Safety Tips

The kitchen can be a dangerous place for young children. It’s important to reinforce some kitchen safety tips with your sitter if meal or snack preparation is expected.

- Always keep young children and pets away from cooking areas.
- Keep knives and other sharp objects out of children’s reach. Never put knives or sharp objects into a full sink because someone could reach in and get cut.
- Keep electrical appliances away from water and operate with dry hands to avoid electrical shock.
- Keep paper towels, dishtowels and potholders away from the stovetop to prevent a fire.
- Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn all appliances off and remove pots or pans from the stovetop.
- Avoid burns by keeping hot pots, pans and other kitchen or household objects out of children’s reach. Always turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.

To obtain information for your babysitter about safely heating solid and liquid foods, see the NDSU Extension Service Publications “Safe Food for Infants and Children: Warming Bottles and Solid Food Safely” and “Safe Food for Baby: Handling Breast Milk, Formula and Solid Food.”

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For more information about nutrition and food safety, visit the NDSU Extension Service Web site:

www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

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