Caring for kids is the heart of babysitting. In this chapter you will learn how to give basic child care and how to keep germs from spreading while you are doing so. You will also learn about the importance of care routines and how to model good basic child-care behavior.
Talking to the Parents About Basic Child Care

Effective basic child care begins with understanding the family’s routines for care. Child-care practices, routines, supplies and equipment vary among families, so it is always important to ask parents about their preferences. For example, some parents use disposable diapers, some use cloth; some children always have a bath and story before bed, others like their stories on the living room sofa and are only bathed by their parents. Children are usually happier if you stick to their basic child-care routines.

Gather all the information about basic child care that you will need to know before you babysit. Write down any basic child-care instructions on the Family Interview Form, found on the Babysitter’s Training CD-ROM. Report to the parents about the basic child care you provided when they return. Use the Babysitter’s Report Record, found on the Babysitter’s Training CD-ROM.

Watching Out for Germs

While on the job, you could come into contact with germs. Germs can be transmitted by—

- Direct contact with other people’s body fluids, such as blood and saliva.
- Air, when breathing in droplets from someone else’s cough or sneeze.
- Contact with an object or surface that has been in contact with a germ, such as a telephone.
- An insect, animal or human bite.

Some germs can cause you to catch a cold or the flu or expose you to common childhood diseases like chicken pox. Other germs can cause serious diseases, like the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

The most important steps you can take to stay healthy and avoid the spread of germs are to wash your hands often and wear disposable gloves if there is a chance you could come into contact with blood or other body fluids such as urine or vomit.
Hand Washing

Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs and infectious diseases.

Always wash your hands—

- Before and after you prepare food.
- Before and after you eat.
- Before and after changing diapers or helping a child with toileting.
- After using the toilet.
- After playing outdoors.
- After touching insects, plants or pets.
- After cleaning up spills.
- Before and after giving first aid.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a good alternative to washing your hands with soap and water. You can use alcohol-based hand sanitizers if there is no water available and your hands are not visibly dirty (i.e., your hands don’t have dirt or blood on them). To use alcohol-based hand sanitizers follow these steps:

1. Apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer to the palm of one hand, using the amount recommended by the manufacturer.

2. Rub hands together making sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers until they are dry.

Remember to always keep alcohol-based hand sanitizers out of the reach of children.
Make sure children wash their hands—

- Before and after they eat.
- After using the toilet (wash infants’ hands after they are diapered).
- After touching objects or surfaces used by other people in public areas.
- After playing outdoors.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing their noses.
- After touching or handling insects, plants or pets.

For step-by-step instructions on washing your hands, see the Skill Sheet, found on pages 93-94.

**Wearing Disposable Gloves**

Wear disposable gloves if you could come into contact with blood or other body fluids. Many families will not have disposable gloves available, so make sure you take some with you. The babysitter’s first aid kit contains nonlatex disposable gloves, and you can also buy them at supermarkets and drugstores. Be sure to find out in advance whether any children you will be caring for are allergic to latex. While many disposable gloves are made from latex, it is best to get gloves that are nonlatex, such as vinyl or nitrile.

Use a new pair of disposable gloves—

- When you change a diaper.
- When you give first aid.
- When you touch any body fluids.

As a babysitter, it is important to use disposable gloves to limit contact with blood, urine, feces or vomit. This will reduce the possibility that you will become infected with infectious diseases. Be sure to carefully remove and properly dispose of gloves after using them. When you remove gloves, be careful not to get any body fluids on yourself. Wash your hands before giving care as well as when you are finished giving care and have disposed of your gloves. For step-by-step instructions on removing disposable gloves, see the Skill Sheet found on pages 95-96.

**Picking Up and Holding Children**

Most children enjoy being held, although some do not. Respect individual preferences. Remember to ask parents how their children like to be picked up and held during the family interview. Write down their answers on the Family Interview Form.
**Infants**

There are several ways to hold an infant. These include the cradle hold, which is used for feeding an infant, and the shoulder hold, which works well if you are walking with a baby or trying to calm a baby down. Always remember to support the head, neck and back of infants under 6 months old. Also, for many infants, holding them close to your body makes them feel safe and secure.

**Toddlers**

Here are some tips on picking up and holding toddlers:

- Toddlers like to be held and carried, but only do so if you can support their weight and their parents say this is okay.
- You can hold toddlers on your lap when giving them a bottle or a drink from a spill-proof cup or when reading to them.
- Toddlers may climb off your lap if they want to play or if they see something they want to investigate, so pay close attention.
- Ask toddlers to help when you need to carry them. They can put both arms around your neck to hold on securely.
- When picking up a toddler, bend at your knees and lift. Don’t bend your back. Also remember to pick them up in a smooth and continuous motion.
- After picking up a toddler, use the upright carry to move him or her from one place to another in an upright position.

For step-by-step instructions on picking up and holding infants and toddlers, see the Skill Sheets found on pages 97-100.

**Feeding Children**

Be sure to ask parents about when, what and how much to feed their children. Pay special attention to what kinds of snacks they are allowed and when they can have them. Write down their instructions on the Family Interview Form. Keep the following tips in mind when feeding children.

**Bottle-Feeding**

- Infants and toddlers may drink milk, formula, fruit juices or water from a bottle.
- When feeding an infant from a bottle you will need a bottle, nipple, bib or cloth to protect the infant’s clothing and a towel or cloth to put over your shoulder for burping.
NEVER warm a bottle in a microwave. Instead, warm the bottle until it is lukewarm (not hot) by running it under warm faucet water or placing it in a pot or bowl of hot water. After heating the water, turn off the heat source and remove the pot from the heat source. Place the bottle in the pot or bowl to warm. Watch the bottle carefully; leave it in the water for a few minutes. Check the temperature of the bottle often to be sure it doesn't become too hot. Realize that if it is too warm to you, it may be too hot for the child.

ALWAYS test the temperature before giving a bottle to a child or an infant. Drip a small amount of the liquid onto the inside of your wrist to make sure it's cool enough. To avoid the spread of germs, do not touch the nipple to your skin. A lukewarm bottle will not burn a child's mouth.

**Spoon-Feeding Older Infants and Toddlers**

- When feeding older infants and toddlers with a spoon you will need a dish, the food, an infant or toddler spoon and a bib. Ask parents what supplies they would like you to use when feeding their children. Write down their answers on the Family Interview Form.
- You can warm food by putting the container of food into hot water. If you use a microwave to heat the food, be sure to stir the food well and to test the temperature before giving it to an infant or a toddler. Put a small amount of food on the inside of your wrist to make sure it's cool enough. Be careful to not touch the spoon to your wrist. Lukewarm food won't burn a child's mouth.
- Don't blow on food to cool it. Let it cool by itself.
- Infants who are just beginning to eat from a spoon may seem to be pushing the food away. Be patient and keep feeding them as long as they seem interested.
- Let toddlers try to feed themselves with a spoon or their hands if they want, even if they make a mess. Help toddlers as needed.

**Feeding Preschoolers and School-Age Children**

- Most young children eat with their fingers, although some will use a small fork or spoon. Eating is fun for most children. Don't worry if they are messy, you can always clean them up.
- If a child does not eat much or refuses to eat or drink, wait a few minutes and try again. If the child is playing with the food more than eating, he or she is probably finished.
- Older children can feed themselves, but you will need to prepare their food. Let them pitch in by helping you set the table.
For step-by-step instructions on feeding children and infants, see the Skill Sheets found on pages 101-104.

**Food and Kitchen Safety**

- Wash your hands before you prepare food.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables carefully before eating them or feeding them to children.
- Be careful when using a microwave. Stir food well after removing it from the microwave.
- Always test the temperature of food and drinks before giving them to children.
- Never leave a child alone in any type of chair even for a moment and even if he or she is strapped into the chair.
- Keep high chairs away from stoves and counters.
- Always use the safety straps on high chairs and booster seats to secure children.
- If you must use the stove, make sure young children are in a safe place where you can see them, approximately 3 feet from the stove. Use only the back or rear burners and turn pan handles toward the back of the stove, out of the reach of children.
- Don’t let children play in the kitchen.
- Follow the parents’ directions for cleaning up and putting away unfinished food and drinks.
- Avoid foods that are choking hazards for infants or toddlers such as raisins, popcorn, nuts, hard candy, grapes and hotdog slices. Make sure food is cut into small bite-size pieces.

**Diapering**

When diapering, it is always good to remember the following:

- Some infants or toddlers are easier to change if they have a toy to hold. Be sure to get the toy before you start diapering.
- Always clean from the front to the back and separate the folds of skin to ensure cleanliness.

For step-by-step instructions on diapering, see the Skill Sheet found on pages 105-107.
Tearless Toileting Tips

Some older toddlers and most preschoolers are learning to use the toilet. Follow the parents’ routine and ask what words or signals their children will use to tell you that they need to use the bathroom. Write down their answers on the Family Interview Form.

Here are some tips for tearless toileting:

- Wash your hands before and after helping a child use the toilet. Be sure children wash their hands after toileting.
- Some children use a child-size toilet or a seat that fits on top of the regular toilet. Other children use the regular toilet seat. Be certain you know what they are comfortable with.
- Children who are already toilet trained sometimes still need help unfastening their clothes, wiping themselves or washing their hands. If you help a girl with wiping, wipe from front to back to keep from spreading germs. Be sure girls who don’t need your help know that they should wipe themselves from front to back.
- Never make a big deal out of an accident because it might embarrass the child. Clean the child and say it was a good try. Be sure to wear disposable gloves when cleaning the child.
- Encourage children to use the toilet often. Give children an opportunity to use the toilet before and after eating, sleeping and activities such as playing outside. If children are showing signs that they need to use the bathroom, such as clutching at their pants, shivering or jumping around, take them to the bathroom immediately.

Dressing Children

Ask the parents if they want you to dress their children and if they have any special instructions. Write their answers on the Family Interview Form. Dressing should be easy and safe if you keep the following tips in mind:

- Give yourself enough time to change the children. Rushing makes the job more difficult and can upset children.
- Let toddlers help with dressing by encouraging them to pull off their socks or pull a loose shirt over their heads. Let them help you undo snaps or buttons.
- Be sure to keep infants safe and comfortable. Never leave an infant alone on a changing table, bed or sofa.
Don’t let children walk around on uncarpeted surfaces in socks without skid-proof bottoms.

To help prevent children from tripping, do not dress them in pants that are too long. If pants are too long, be sure to roll up the pant legs. Make sure shoes fit securely and laces are tied.

Avoid dressing children in clothes that fasten with drawstrings, especially around the neck. A child can be strangled by a hooded sweatshirt when a drawstring tie catches on something.

For step-by-step instructions on dressing children, see the Skill Sheets found on pages 108-110.

**Bathing Toddlers**

Bath time can be fun, but remember that safety always comes first and the child requires constant supervision. If you’re asked by the parents to bathe their toddler, ask them about the child’s bath time routine. Make sure to ask about the child’s favorite shampoo, soap and toys and any sensitivities. **Remember, only bathe toddlers if you’ve specifically been asked to by their parents and you are comfortable doing so.** Babysitters should not bathe infants.

When giving a bath, always keep safety in mind. Remember these important points:

- Never be more than an arm’s length away from the toddler at any time.
- Never take your eyes off the toddler during bath time. This includes when you are filling up the bath tub and when it is draining.
- If you are caring for more than one child, only give a bath if you can supervise all the children adequately (e.g., you are babysitting two children and the younger school-age child can play independently next to you).
- Gather all supplies and toys before you run the water.
- Don’t fill the tub too high. The water only needs to come up to the toddler’s hips.
- The water should be warm, but not hot. Test the water on your wrist or elbow before putting the child in the tub.
- Be aware of the sharp edges of the faucet and keep the child’s head away from it.
- Remember that the tub will be slippery. Always help the child in and out of the bath and make sure the toddler stays seated while in the tub.
- Never force a child to take a bath.
Bath time should be fun and not hurried. Let the toddler get accustomed to the bath before you start washing or shampooing. Also, give the toddler time to play.

Tilt the child's head back when you shampoo and rinse his or her hair. Remember that some children are very sensitive to water on their face. If toddlers resist having their hair washed, do not force them.

Rest and Sleep
Families have a wide variety of rest and sleep routines. Ask the parents about the child’s nap, rest and bedtime routines. Write their answers on the Family Interview Form.

Some children wake up or come out of quiet time in a calm way. Other children wake up noisy and ready to play. Some children wake up crying or upset.

Putting Children to Bed
Follow these steps when you are putting children to bed:

1. Ask parents about their children's bedtime routines and record their answers on the Family Interview Form.

2. About 15 minutes ahead of time, tell children that bedtime or naptime is coming.

3. Anticipate requests by making sure to follow the children’s normal bedtime routines. Typical routines include having a bedtime drink or snack, brushing teeth, reading a story or book, turning on a nightlight, bringing a stuffed animal to bed or using a favorite blanket.

4. Help prepare children for sleep by choosing quiet activities such as reading comforting stories, listening to soft music or rubbing the child's back.

5. Check an infant's crib and remove toys, blankets, pillows or any other soft, fluffy objects that could choke or suffocate the infant. (See the Safety Inspection Checklist, found on pages 36-37, for more bedtime safety tips.)

6. Put infants to sleep on their backs, face-up. It is not safe for infants to sleep on their stomachs or face-down. (See “Sudden Infant Death Syndrome,” found on page 92) Some parents may request that you put their infants to sleep on their sides. You should do so only if a parent tells you...
that a doctor has directed that the infant sleep this way and the parent shows you how to correctly position the infant on his or her side.

7. Tell the child to sleep well and say good night.

8. Check on children every half hour. Make sure you stay where you are able to hear them when they wake up. Discuss with the parents how to use the baby monitors if they have them. Write down their instructions on the Family Interview Form.

9. Put children back to bed if they get up. Comfort them if they are scared or have nightmares. Be kind but firm in helping children follow their rest and sleep routines.

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**SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME (SIDS)**

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden, unexpected and unexplained death of an apparently healthy infant. It is the leading cause of death of infants between the ages of 1 month and 1 year. In the United States, 3000 infants die every year of SIDS. Infants who sleep on their stomachs at night or naptime have an increased risk of SIDS.

To help reduce the risk of SIDS—

- **ALWAYS** place an infant on his or her back at night or naptime, using a firm mattress in a safety-approved crib or bassinet.

- Make sure that there is no soft bedding, such as pillows, blankets and bumpers, or soft toys, such as stuffed animals, in the crib or bed. These items could cause suffocation.

- Check the sleeping infant frequently.
Hand Washing

*NOTE:* Remove all jewelry and watches.

1. Turn on warm water.

2. Wet your hands with water and put soap on your hands.

3. Rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds (about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” once) (A).
NOTE: Scrub your nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands (B).

4 Rinse your hands with water.

5 Dry your hands with a paper towel.

6 Turn off the faucet using the paper towel. Throw the paper towel away.

NOTE: Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers to clean your hands if hand-washing facilities are not available.
Removing Disposable Gloves

1. Partially remove the first glove.
   - Pinch the glove at the wrist, being careful to touch only the glove's outside surface (A).
   - Pull the glove inside-out toward the fingertips without completely removing it (B).
   - The glove is now partly inside-out.

2. Remove the second glove.
   - With your partially gloved hand, pinch the outside surface of the second glove.
   - Pull the second glove toward the fingertips until it is inside-out, and then remove it completely.
3. Finish removing both gloves.
   - Grasp both gloves with your free hand.
   - Touch only the clean interior surface of the glove.

4. After removing both gloves—
   - Discard gloves in an appropriate container.
   - Wash your hands thoroughly.
Picking Up Infants

*NOTE: Always support the head, neck and back of an infant younger than 6 months old.*

1. Slide both of your hands under the infant’s underarms.

2. Wrap your fingers around the infant’s ribs.

3. Gently lift the infant while supporting his or her head with your fingers.

OR

1. Slide one hand under the infant’s head and back.

2. Slide your other hand under the infant’s bottom.

3. Gently lift the infant while supporting his or her head.
Holding Infants: Cradle Hold

**NOTE:** Always support the head, neck and back of an infant younger than 6 months old.

1. Support the infant’s bottom and lower back with one hand.

2. Cradle the infant in your arm and support the upper back and head with your other arm.

3. Hold the infant’s head near or at the bend of your elbow.

4. Hold the infant close to your body with the infant’s back straight and protected.
Holding Infants: Shoulder Hold

**NOTE:** Always support the head, neck and back of an infant younger than 6 months old.

1. Put one arm under the infant’s bottom and support the head and back with the other arm.

2. Hold the infant in an upright position so that he or she can look over your shoulder.
Picking Up and Holding Toddlers: Upright Carry

1. Bend your knees.

2. Pick up the toddler under both arms. Slide both of your hands under the toddler’s underarms and lift.

3. Put one arm under the toddler’s bottom and support his or her back with your other arm.

**TIP:** Use your hip to help support the arm placed under the toddler’s bottom.
Bottle-Feeding

1. Wash your hands.

2. Gather supplies.

3. Warm and prepare the bottle as the parent directed.

   NOTE: Shake the bottle to make sure it is heated evenly. Test the temperature on the inside of your wrist; it should be lukewarm (not hot).

4. Rest the infant comfortably on your lap.

   NOTE: Keep the infant’s head higher than his or her shoulders to prevent choking.
5 Give the infant the bottle.

**NOTE:** Hold the bottle for the infant. Tilt the bottle to a 45-degree angle so that air is not getting into the nipple.

6 Gently burp the infant when he or she has taken about one third of the bottle.

**NOTE:** Hold the infant upright and put his or her head on your shoulder. Pat the infant gently on the back until you hear a burp.

**TIP:** You can also burp the infant by sitting him or her on your lap, making sure you support his or her head, and patting gently on the back.

7 After burping the infant, give the remainder of the bottle. Burp the infant again when he or she is finished drinking.
Spoon-Feeding

1. Wash your hands and the child’s hands.

2. Gather supplies.

3. Warm and prepare the food as the parent directed.

   **NOTE:** Stir food to make sure it is heated evenly. Test the temperature on the inside of your wrist; it should be lukewarm (not hot).

4. Put the child in a high chair or infant seat. Buckle the safety belt securely.
5 Put a small amount of strained food or cereal on the tip of the spoon and feed the child.

6 When you are done feeding, wash the child’s hands and face and wipe up any food that was spilled.

7 Wash your hands.
Diapering

1 Gather supplies.

2 Wash your hands.

3 Put on disposable gloves.

**NOTE:** Use the safety straps or guardrails on a changing table to secure the infant or toddler. Never leave an infant or a toddler alone on a changing table. Keep one hand on the infant or toddler at all times. Use a changing table or the floor protected with a water-resistant pad to change the infant or toddler.

4 Place the infant or toddler on his or her back.
5 Take off the dirty diaper.

*Cloth Diapers:* Remove rubber pants first, then unfasten and remove pins from the diaper. **DO NOT** put the pins in your mouth.

**NOTE:** Fold the diaper so that the mess is on the inside. Set the dirty diaper out of the way where the infant or toddler can’t reach it.

6 Use one hand to hold the infant’s or toddler’s feet and lift up the bottom, then clean with baby wipes or a washcloth.

**TIP:** Keep boys and girls covered with a baby wipe or a diaper while changing them to avoid being sprayed.

7 Use one hand to hold the infant’s or toddler’s feet and lift up the bottom. Use the other hand to slip the open clean diaper under his or her bottom.

*Cloth Diapers:* Put the clean diaper under the infant or toddler with the folded part in front for a boy and in the back for a girl.
8. Fasten the diaper with the tabs.

Cloth Diapers: Overlap the back of the diaper on top of the front at the infant’s or toddler’s hips. Hold your fingers between the diaper and the infant or toddler and pin on the outside of the diaper.

**NOTE:** Put your fingers between the diaper and the infant or toddler so that you do not tape or pin the diaper to him or her.

9. Remove your disposable gloves and dispose of them, the dirty diaper and baby wipes in an appropriate container.

Cloth Diapers: Dispose of the feces in the toilet and put the dirty diaper in the appropriate container.

**NOTE:** Keep one hand on the infant or toddler at all times. Make sure the changing surface is clean.

10. Wash the infant’s or toddler’s hands and place him or her in a safe place while you wash your hands.
Undressing Children

1. Undo the snaps or buttons on the front of the shirt.

2. Gently slide one arm out of the sleeve and then slide out the other arm.

3. Ease the shirt over the child’s head, gently past one ear, then the other.

**NOTE:** When undressing an infant, always support the head and neck. Never leave an infant alone on the changing table.

4. Put the dirty laundry in the place designated by the parents.
Dressing Children in Snap or Button Shirts

1. Open all snaps or buttons.

2. Roll or scrunch-up the sleeves if they are long.

3. Reach through one sleeve, grasp the child’s hand and pull the hand and arm gently through the sleeve.

4. Bring the shirt around the back of the child. Do the same with the other arm.

5. Fasten the snaps or buttons.
Dressing Children in a T-Shirt

1. To put on a T-shirt or pullover shirt, stretch the neck of the shirt so that it is larger than the child’s head.

2. Pull the neck opening over the head, keeping it away from the child’s ears and face.

3. Reach through a sleeve opening and gently pull one arm through it.

4. Do the same with the other arm.

**NOTE:** Always be careful to protect the child’s eyes, ears, nose and jaw.