

# Health & Safety Tips for Infants in Child Care

Prepared by the Health & Safety Specialists at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

## When should infants' hands be washed?

- Infants' hands should be washed upon arrival to child care, before and after eating, after getting diaper changed, after spitting up on hands, after wiping nose with hands, after playing outside, whenever visibly dirty. Diaper wipe can be used to clean hands if the infant doesn't have head and neck control.

## What should I know about bottle feeding?

- Bottles of formula are required by licensing to be discarded after one hour after a feeding.
- Bottles of breastmilk are required by the food program to be discarded after two hours after a feeding.
- Bottles should be heated in warm water, crockpot, or bottle warmer – no microwaves.
- If crockpot is used for heating bottles of formula, it should be emptied, sanitized, and refilled daily.
- Breastmilk should be heated separately from other bottles in container of warm water or bottle warmer.
- Provider must wash hands before preparing bottles. Provider should wash at a sink not used for diapering/toileting.
- If there is only one sink used for food preparation and diapering, water should be taken from the kitchen sink daily instead of using water from the tap within the room (child care center).
- Bottles should be labeled with infant's name and the time the bottle was offered/heated to ensure it is not given past one hour or given to the wrong child.
- Contents of bottles should be tested before being served to prevent burns.
- Infants should be fed on demand, not by a rigid schedule.
- Infants should be held when given a bottle; bottles cannot be propped. Infants are allowed to feed themselves if they can hold their own bottle, their head is elevated and stay within sight.

## What should I know about meals for my infant?

- Infant's hands must be washed before eating.
- The highchair must have a safety strap and a crotch bar/strap to protect an infant from sliding under the tray, causing a head entrapment hazard or climbing out causing a fall. The safety strap must always be used and be properly adjusted for the child.
- The highchair tray should be cleaned and sanitized before food is served.
- Food should be served in dishes/plates, not placed directly on the highchair tray. It is more sanitary and more respectful. No Styrofoam dishes/cups or disposable plastic utensils should be used with infants.
- The temperature of food should be tested before serving to prevent burns.
- Food should not be fed out of jar/container unless infant eats the entire amount.
- If food is saved, it should only be saved for 24 hours.
- Food should be served in pieces ¼" or smaller to prevent choking.
- An infant must be in sight (and preferably within arm's reach) when eating, in case of choking.

- If utensil, cup, or dish is thrown or falls on the floor, it should be rinsed or replaced before giving it back to an infant.

## When or how should swings, bouncy chairs, car seat carriers, etc. be used for my infant?

- These devices are not approved or safe to be used for sleeping. Infants are only allowed to sleep in an approved crib or playpen.
- If these devices are used, time should be limited to maximum of 15 minutes, two times a day.
- Safety straps should always be used properly along with close supervision to prevent strangulation.
- Bouncy chairs, Bumbo seats (avoid placing on hard surfaces), car seats, etc. should not be placed on elevated surfaces, only on the floor away from stairs.
- Infants need to have floor time (on tummy and on back) when they are awake and supervised to facilitate proper development.

## What should I make sure I discuss with a child care program regarding my infant's sleeping practices?

- Infants must always be placed completely flat on their backs in a crib or playpen for sleep. No incline allowed.
- Ask to look at the crib/playpen:
  - Crib: by December 28, 2012, all child care programs must use cribs that meet new federal standards made effective June 28, 2011. Check [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) for details.
  - Playpen: check [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) website to see if model number is recalled; no holes in mesh; sturdy frame; only use pad provided by manufacturer of playpen; no extra padding; fitted playpen sheet\*.
  - \* Mattress/pad must maintain shape when fitted sheet is used. Mattress/pad must lay flat and touch all four corners of the frame. If the sheet doesn't fit properly, it is not recommended to use a sheet.
- Infants must be visually checked on a regular basis while sleeping (approximately every 10-15 minutes). Lighting should be bright enough to check color of skin and if infant is breathing.
- Monitor must be used so infant can be heard at all times when sleeping. Sound machines/music should be at low volume.
- If crib/playpen is used by other infants, sheets must be changed between. Sheets cannot be shared. If no sheet is used in a playpen, it should be cleaned with soap and water between uses of different infants.
- Sheets must be washed weekly, sooner if soiled.
- Bibs, hooded clothing, headbands and hats should be removed when sleeping to prevent risk of strangulation or suffocation.
- Pacifiers should not be tied around an infant's neck or clipped to an infant's clothing for sleep. Stuffed toys attached to pacifiers are not recommended for sleep.
- Blankets are not recommended. If blanket is used, only one blanket (thin is recommended) can be used (no toys, pillows, bumper pads or other soft items in crib/playpen). Consider using a sleep sack instead of a blanket.

- Any type of necklace (jewelry, teething etc.) is not recommended at any time and should not be allowed for sleep.
- Licensing requires written parental permission to use one blanket or sleep sack, a pacifier, and a security item for sleep.
- Infants' heads/faces must be uncovered. Covering their heads/faces can cause overheating and suffocation.
- Swaddling is not recommended. If you want your infant to be swaddled, only one thin blanket should be used and it should not come any higher than to the infant's shoulders. Swaddling must be discontinued once an infant shows signs of attempting to roll.
- Cribs/playpens must be spaced 2 feet apart for licensing. 3 feet apart for best practice.
- Crib/playpen should be placed in a safe location with nothing within reach (ex. monitor cord, window blinds, etc.)
- Nothing is allowed to be attached to the crib/playpen, hung on sides, or over the top.

### What should I know about diapering?

- Diapers must be changed promptly. Diapers should be visually checked at least every 2 hours.
  - Infant's bottom should be cleaned with a wipe even if only wet.
  - Infant's hands must be washed after every diaper change (clean wipe can be used to wash infant's hands until infant has head and neck control).
  - Diapering pad must be washable and nonporous with no tears or holes. Diapering pads cannot be covered with fabric.
  - Safety straps on diaper pads and changing tables are not recommended to use because the straps spread germs and give providers a false sense of security. The provider should keep a hand on the infant at all times when diapering.
  - Pad must be disinfected after every diaper change.
  - Provider's hands must be washed after every diaper change.
  - Home child care: Hands should be washed in bathroom. Center child care: Hands should be washed at diapering sink. If only one sink is available for diapering and food prep, then sink faucet/handles should be disinfected between diapering and bottle/food prep.
  - Use of baby powder is not recommended by AAP and FDA as it can affect an infant's breathing and may contain harmful ingredients.
- ### Anything else I should look for related to health & safety?
- Mouthed toys should be picked up after they are mouthed and set aside before another infant touches it.
  - Mouthed toys should be cleaned and sanitized daily. Other toys and infant equipment (ex. exersaucer) should be cleaned with soap and water weekly.
  - Pacifiers should be labeled, stored open to air, washed with soap and water if they fall on floor, checked daily for tears/cracks, and stored separately from diapering supplies.
  - Infants spend a lot of time on the floor, so carpets should be vacuumed daily, steam cleaned periodically (ideally monthly). Tile, vinyl, wood flooring should be swept/cleaned daily.
  - It is recommended for adults to remove their shoes or change into shoes only worn indoors to prevent contaminating the floor in an infant room.
  - Windows should be opened daily for fresh air (even in the winter).
  - Infants should be taken outside daily (weather permitting) for fresh air and change in scenery.
  - Bleach water solution is recommended for sanitizing/disinfecting. Surface or item needs to be cleaned with soap and water first. Bleach solution needs to be mixed every day to be effective. If another product is used, it must be EPA registered and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
  - Infants should have clean face, hair, and clothing when parents pick them up. Nose should be wiped, food removed from face and hair, and clothes/bibs changed as needed due to food, drool, spit-up, etc. Parents should provide plenty of extra clothing.
  - All toys should be checked to make sure they are not choking hazards (toys should not be able to fit inside the inside of a toilet paper tube). Toys should also be made of nontoxic materials and be free from sharp points/edges and loose parts.
  - Safety check of the room (center child care) or of the home (home child care) should be done daily to look for possible safety hazards. Example: all outlets should be covered, blind cords out of reach, etc.
  - Parents must be given a daily communication sheet recounting their infant's day (when infant ate and how much, when infant slept and how long, diaper changes, activities, etc.).
  - If the provider has a pet, it should never be left alone with an infant.
  - Gates are required at the top and bottom of stairs. A wall-mounted gate is recommended at the top of stairs instead of a pressure bar style.

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