



Department of Health
and Human Services

Maine People Living
Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives

John E. Baldacci, Governor

Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner

Office of Child and Family Services

Early Care and Education Unit

2 Anthony Avenue
11 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0011
Phone: (207) 624-7909
Fax: (207) 287-6156

Supported by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, through the Child Care Development Fund, Administration for Children and Families, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services 015-10A-8713-012

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
P A I D
Permit No. 8
Augusta, ME

CHILDREN IN MY CARE

from the DHHS Early Care & Education Unit

A Series for Family, Friends, and Neighbors Who Care for Children

ISSUE
3

Donna cares for two of her neighbor's children informally—Derek, 21 months, and Danny, 6 months. Last winter, Derek and Danny got one cold right after the other. Neither of them felt good until spring.

Donna cares for two of her neighbor's children informally—Derek, 21 months, and Danny, 6 months. Last winter, Derek and Danny got one cold right after the other. Neither of them felt good until spring.

After that, Donna decided to do some things differently. During her child care support group, Donna asked about health and safety for children and got some ideas.

“They had us put glitter on our hands and wash until it all came off!” She laughs. “If the glitter had been germs, no wonder little Derek and Danny kept getting sick. Now I wash my hands every time I turn around and help them to wash their hands too! None of us have been sick this winter!”

Donna also shared some ideas with Lorraine, the boys' mom. “Lorraine and I went through our homes together to put latches on cabinets and gates at the stairways. Now neither of us has to worry so much about him getting hurt. Both of us feel a lot better now.”

Look for these books at your local library or bookstore

Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw
I Went Walking by Sue Williams



Child and Family Services

An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

John E. Baldacci, Governor

Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner

Keep Children Safe and Healthy

When you care for children, your biggest and most important job is ensuring health and safety. There are lots of things you can do to prevent—or at least cut down on—sickness. There are lots of ways you can prevent kids from hurting themselves.

7 Things You Can Do

1. Wash your hands! Good hand washing is the best thing you can do to stop the spread of infection and disease.
2. Set up the children's space so it is clean and safe. Remove any hazards and use a good disinfectant on toys and play surfaces.
3. Plan ahead about what you would do “just in case.” Have a first aid kit and an emergency plan.
4. Tell parents about your plan and review it often so you can take quick action if you need to.
5. Keep a list of the children and where their families can be reached and medical information.
6. Always keep children in sight so you can prevent accidents or act quickly should one happen.
7. Post emergency numbers by your telephone and call whenever in doubt.

Firmly enforce a few simple safety rules

- Stay away from the stove.
- Stay on the sidewalk, not the road.
- Stay in your car seat.
- Be gentle with people and creatures.

Responds to Children's Needs

Children sometimes use their behaviors to express their needs. Inappropriate behaviors are often due to a child's unmet needs. When you respond to their needs in a positive way, children will usually respond to you with a behavior that you like a lot better. Of course, nothing works every time, but here are some positive ways to interact with children to promote appropriate behavior.

When they are looking for child care, many parents prefer to ask someone in their own circle of family and friends. This is a big responsibility and a real sign that they trust you. This issue and future issues of Children in My Care are designed especially for people like you who may not be professional child care providers but have opened their homes and hearts to provide child care for a family member, friend, or neighbor. This series is designed to give you tips on how to provide a healthy, nurturing experience for these children and was adapted from the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, or national origin, in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities, or its hiring or employment practices. This notice is provided as required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Maine Human Rights Act and Executive Order Regarding State of Maine Contracts for Services. Questions, concerns, complaints or requests for additional information regarding the ADA may be forwarded to DHHS' ADA Compliance/EEO Coordinators, 11 State House Station – 221 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04333, 207-287-4289 (V), 207-287-3488 (V), 1-800-606-0215 (TTY). Individuals who need auxiliary aids for effective communication in program and services of DHHS are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance/EEO Coordinators. This notice is available in alternate formats, upon request.

Caring..Responsive..Well-Managed..We are DHHS.

continued on next page

You know that children will get into things they shouldn't. Children will put things in their mouths. They will knock things over. They will open cabinet doors. They will try to explore stairs, electrical outlets, cords, anywhere they haven't been, and anything they haven't touched, smelled, or tasted before. It's up to you to be sure that children can explore in a safe and clean place where you have removed, latched, and disinfected all the things that might cause harm to young children.

Plan ahead to prevent illness and injuries before they happen.

Prevent sickness and infection by washing your hands often and well.

Be sure you wash your hands

- After using the toilet.
- After changing a diaper.
- After wiping a nose.
- Before and after eating or preparing food.
- Anytime hands get dirty.

Teach children to wash their hands too. Encourage lots of hugging and snuggles, but limit kisses because they can spread germs. When children are teething, they put everything in their mouths. Use a bleach solution (1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon water) to clean changing tables, furniture, and toys at least daily. Be sure you clean toys before any other child can put the same toy in his mouth.

Be sure that toys are suited for the age and development of the child. Since young children explore with their mouths, avoid toys that have small toys they might choke on. How do you know if a piece is too small? Use an old canister for 35 mm film or a toilet paper tube as a "choke tube." If the toy fits into the canister, it's small

enough to choke on and too small for infants and young toddlers to play with safely.

Childproof your home!

- Put up sturdy gates at the stairways.
- Latch cabinets.
- Cover electrical outlets.
- Put cords out of reach.
- Put away anything a child might reach for, break, or topple over onto himself.

Set your home up for children and spend more time playing with them than rushing to prevent an accident.

Make an emergency plan.

What would you do if

- Disaster strikes—fire, power failure, blizzard?
- A child gets hurt?
- A child gets ill?
- Someone you don't know shows up to take a child home?
- A parent shows up drunk, on drugs, or ill?

Think ahead so you'll know what to do "just in case the worst should happen."

Review your plan often so you can take quick action if you ever need to. Talk to the children's families so they'll know the plan too.

Keep emergency contact information handy. Post emergency numbers—ambulance, poison control, fire department, police, and parents—by the telephone and call whenever you're not sure what to do. Have a first aid kit and keep it well stocked.

continued on back page

Safety Checklist

Use the following list to check areas that might cause danger to children in your home. Share this list with parents too!

General

- Guns are kept in a locked gun safe and bullets are locked in a separate location.
- Windows have screens.
- Children aren't exposed to lead paint or asbestos.
- Electrical cords are out of children's reach.
- Electrical outlets are covered.
- Window blind cords are wrapped and out of child's reach, especially near beds or cribs.
- Hot surfaces are out of children's reach.
- Matches and lighters are stored out of children's reach.
- Tap water is lower than 120 degrees F.
- There is no trash or waste buildup.
- Medicines and products with harmful chemicals are locked and out of reach.
- Stairways have gates across them. Gates do not allow children to put their heads through the grates.
- Cabinets are latched.
- Children are supervised at all times.

Bathrooms

- All areas are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Hands are washed following diaper changes or toileting.
- Water temperature is lower than 120 degrees.
- Children are never left unsupervised in or near water (even a bucket full of water).

Toys and Equipment

- Toys are free from broken pieces or sharp edges.
- Toys that have small pieces that present a choking danger are not used with infants and young toddlers.
- Toys or surfaces that children mouth are disinfected after every use.
- Children do not play with plastic bags or balloons.
- Toy chests have air holes and lids that cannot slam shut.
- Only nontoxic materials are used.
- Cribs have slats placed 2 3/8 inches apart or less and have snug fitting mattresses.
- Cloth items are flame resistant.

Outdoor Play Areas

- Play equipment is safe and kept in good repair.
- Play equipment is set up so that there is room to move around it without being hit by other children playing on it.
- Play areas are fenced to prevent children from wandering.
- Play area is free from animal feces.

Kitchen and Food Preparation Areas

- Hands are washed before handling food.
- Trash is stored away from food prep areas in a covered container.

- Refrigerator temperature is 40 degrees or lower.
- Perishable foods are stored in covered containers.
- Pest strips are not used.
- Food prep surfaces and utensils are clean.
- Sharp items are kept out of children's reach.
- Pot handles on the stove are always turned toward the back of the stove.
- An all purpose fire extinguisher is mounted near the stove.

Emergency Preparedness

- Caregivers review and practice emergency plans regularly.
- First aid kits are well stocked and readily available.
- Smoke detectors and other alarms are in good working order.
- Emergency phone numbers are posted by telephones.
- Doors and gates open out for easy exit.
- Children are taught the words stop and no. Caregivers use stop and no sparingly to indicate danger.
- Children are taught to tell an adult if they or anyone else is hurt.