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.

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.

Firmly enforce a few simple safety rules

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.

1. “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 winter!”

2. 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.

3. 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.

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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.

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.
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, butHands 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).

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).

Kitchen and Food Preparation Areas
- Hands are washed before handling food.
- Trash is stored away from food prep areas in a covered container.

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.

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 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.