



UNIVERSITY OF
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FCS 8157

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Feeding Babies and Young Children: A Teen Sitter's Guide to Food Safety¹

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Babysitting may be the first job you ever have. It also may be the most important job you ever have.

KEEPING A BABY

It's your job to keep the kids safe. You have to know how to handle accidents, fire, strange phone calls.

You also need to know how to handle food. A baby is so tiny that even a little bit of unsafe food could make it very sick. Young children are also vulnerable to foodborne illness.

So take a minute to review these tips. Then you can guard those soft, cuddly youngsters you keep from foodborne illness as well as other problems.

A number of childcare experts think you should be at least 13 years old to sit with an infant. They also suggest you visit the baby's house before you keep the baby by yourself.

Go over everything you need to know with the parent — how to hold, feed and burp the baby; the sleep schedule; where supplies are kept; and how to

change diapers. Is there a medical condition you should know about? Familiarize yourself with the kitchen and microwave.

Request a list of key numbers be located by the phone. Get the parent's and a neighbor's number. You, of course, know to call "911" or the local emergency number for fire and police.

BABY'S BOTTLE

Older babies can drink a bottle from the refrigerator. Younger babies (six months and under) need lukewarm food. To warm a bottle, do the following:

- Heat milk in a disposable insert in a plastic bottle by holding it under hot tap water for a few minutes. Test the milk's temperature on top of your hand. At body temperature — when you can barely feel a drop on your skin — it's ready for the baby.
- Be careful warming hard plastic or glass bottles in the microwave. Remove the cap and nipple.

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Heat a refrigerated eight-ounce bottle 30 seconds on HIGH. Let stand for a minute. Shake and test on your hand.

If you have plenty of bottles and the baby nearly drained the first one, discard the leftover milk. But if there are only a few prepared bottles and the baby drank very little, put the used bottle right back in the refrigerator. Use it at the next feeding.

BABY FOOD

Check that the safety button in the lid of a glass jar of baby food is down and that the lid "pops" when you open it. Don't use the food otherwise. Don't use food from jars with chipped glass or rusty lids either.

Baby fruits and vegetables can be served at room temperature, but other baby foods should be heated.

- Spoon a portion from the jar into a microwave dish. Don't put the jar in the microwave! A small serving should heat on HIGH in eight seconds. Stir and let stand a short time.
CAUTION: Stir and taste to ensure a lukewarm temperature before feeding the baby. Otherwise, "hot spots" in the food could burn the baby's mouth.
- Do not heat baby meats or meat sticks in the microwave. They heat unevenly.

LEFTOVERS, SNACKS FOR OLDER KIDS

To microwave leftovers or a simple meal:

- Use microwave dishes only and set the timer a little short. You can always microwave more to finish heating, but you can't save ruined food.

- If cooking microwaveable food from the package, follow directions carefully.
- Stir food half-way through the heating time to even out temperature.
- Use hotpad holders when removing dishes from the microwave. Let popcorn sit for a few minutes before opening. Open popcorn and remove plastic wrap on other items so steam escapes away from your face and hands.
- Let food stand to cool before serving. Cut into cheese hotdogs or filled pasta shells before eating. The fillings get very hot.

KITCHEN "MUSTS"

- Make sure you and the children wash your hands before and after handling food.
- Keep kitchen and dishes as clean as possible. Put cold foods back in the refrigerator as soon as you've used them.
- Remember healthful eating. Fresh fruits and vegetables are better for the kids — and for you — than sweet, salty or greasy foods.
- Be careful of foods that can choke children. Don't give young children hard candy, nuts or popcorn. Cut hotdogs, grapes and other solid foods into small pieces to serve.