

Caring for Infants and Children

HEALTH GOALS

- I will learn about the growth and development of infants and children.
- I will provide responsible care for infants and children.

What You'll Learn

1. Describe what to know to be a good babysitter. (p. 255)
2. Describe ways to care for infants and toddlers. (p. 256)
3. Describe ways to care for young children. (p. 258)

Why It's Important

Perhaps you have been or will be asked to look after a child. You will need to know how to act responsibly. This information also will help you if you become a parent one day.

Key Terms

- babysitter
- sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- time out

A person who provides care for infants and children during a short absence of a parent or guardian is a **babysitter**. This lesson describes how to prepare to be a babysitter. You will learn how to care for infants and young children from birth to eight years old.



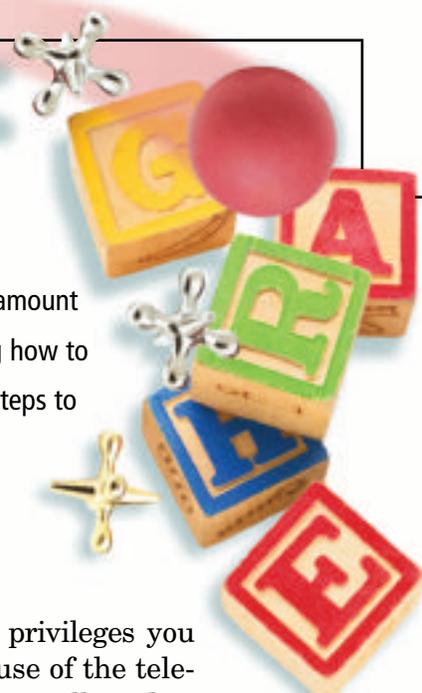
What Would You Do?

Writing About Babysitting Suppose that one night you are babysitting for your younger sister and she does not want to go to bed because she is frightened. Review the information about caring for young children on page 258, then write an entry in your health journal about what you would do to calm your younger sister so that she could fall asleep.



Health TEKS covered by Lesson 22: 1A, 1I, 5D, 7F, 8A, 9A, 12B, 13A, 15A, 16A

Childdisitting



Childdisitting, also known as babysitting, is a task that requires a great amount of responsibility. It means more than watching a child. Understanding how to follow safety rules when watching a child is a must. Knowing what steps to take in an emergency also is a must.

A Childsitter's Checklist

A responsible childsitter is prepared. It is your responsibility to obtain the information you need before you childsit.

Qualifications You have taken a first aid course and are familiar with universal precautions. You also have completed a childsitting course offered by the American Red Cross or by another organization.

Personal You have your parents' or guardian's approval to childsit and you check to make sure you will be available to childsit. You discuss with the child's parents or guardian the hours you will childsit and the payment you expect. You arrange for transportation to and from the job.

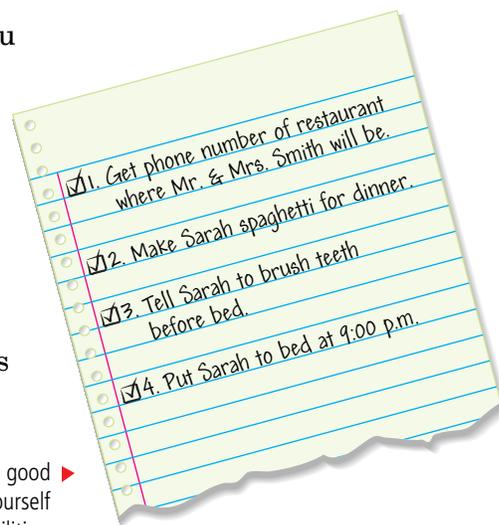
The child (or children) You meet the child or children and learn their name(s) and age(s). You know when mealtime, naptime, and bedtime are. You also know which activities are allowed and which are not, and you know what the child's or children's favorite activities and toys are.

Possible health needs You know what health problems, such as allergies, the child has, and you know what medications he or she might need.

Details You familiarize yourself with the home and where everything is. If there is a pet, you discuss pet rules.

You check about the privileges you will have, such as the use of the telephone. You ask if you are allowed to have visitors and if you are welcome to eat any food in the refrigerator. You know what time to arrive and what time you expect the parents or guardian to be home.

Information You know emergency telephone numbers including police, fire, and poison control. You know if 911 service is available. You know the name and number of the child's physician.

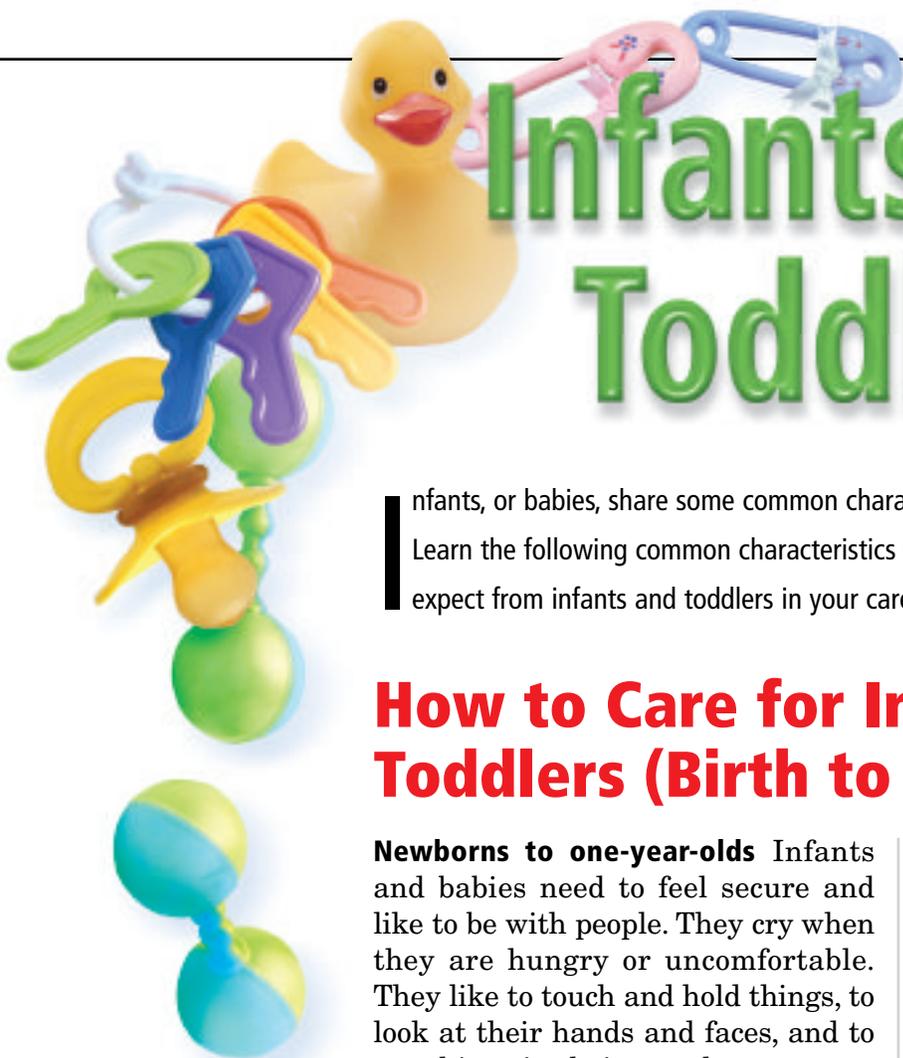


A checklist is a good way to remind yourself of your responsibilities.

Characteristics of a Childsitter

A responsible childsitter is:

- observant and alert
- calm during emergencies
- able to follow instructions
- trained in first aid
- able to recognize safety hazards
- able to communicate with adults
- able to communicate with young children
- able to supervise young children
- patient and friendly



Infants and Toddlers

Infants, or babies, share some common characteristics. So do toddlers. Learn the following common characteristics so you will know what to expect from infants and toddlers in your care.

How to Care for Infants and Toddlers (Birth to Three Years)

Newborns to one-year-olds Infants and babies need to feel secure and like to be with people. They cry when they are hungry or uncomfortable. They like to touch and hold things, to look at their hands and faces, and to put things in their mouths.

One- to three-year-olds Children this age need to feel secure. They want to be independent. They want to eat, drink, and get dressed without help. They like to play, build things, and watch what other children are doing. They like to do the same thing over and over again and may have temper tantrums if they don't get what they want.

A responsible child sitter never leaves an infant or toddler alone. A responsible child sitter never shakes or hits an infant or toddler. Even gently shaking a young child can cause severe head and neck injury known as shaken baby

syndrome. Consult a parent or guardian if an infant or child persists in a behavior you find difficult or inappropriate.

You need certain skills to provide responsible care for an infant or toddler. Consult the child sitter's list of skills for infant and toddler care, shown below, to make sure you have the skills needed.

A Childsitter's Skills for the Care of Infants and Toddlers

You know how to pick up and hold a baby. You slide your arm under the baby's body. You cradle the baby against your body, or support the baby against your shoulder. You always support the baby's head with one hand. You also support the shoulders. You are careful when touching the two soft spots on the top of the baby's head.

You know what to do when a baby cries. You determine if the baby is too warm, too cold, hungry, teething, or ill. Is the diaper wet or soiled? You take the appropriate action.



▲ Babies always have favorite toys.



◀ A three-year-old is becoming better coordinated.

You know what to do if you think an infant or toddler is sick. You call the parents or guardian, tell them the symptoms, and follow their advice.

You know how to diaper a baby. You wash your hands and have ready what you need: diaper, baby wipes, ointment, cotton balls, and safety pins for cloth diapers. You clean the baby's bottom and put on a clean diaper. You dispose of the soiled diaper appropriately and wash your hands again.

You know how to bathe a baby. If the umbilical cord is still present, you give only a sponge bath. Otherwise, you bathe the baby in a small tub or sink. You have warm water, a soft washcloth, and baby soap ready. You place the baby in the water while supporting the baby's head. After washing, you rinse the baby with clean, warm water from a cup. You wrap the baby in a towel and make sure the baby's head is covered.

You know how to give a baby a bottle. You ask the parents or guardian for instructions to prepare the bottle and you follow them. You make sure the bottle nipple is always full of milk.

You know how to burp a baby. You put a towel on your shoulder and hold the baby upright. You support the baby's head and back and gently pat the baby's back.

Or you lay the baby face down on your lap and gently pat the back. Or you sit the baby on your lap and support the baby's chest while gently patting the back.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

The sudden and unexplained death of an infant younger than one year of age is **sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)**. SIDS is responsible for over 3000 deaths each year in the United States. It is a leading cause of death among babies between the ages of two and four months.

Cause of SIDS The cause of SIDS is not known for sure. It is currently believed that SIDS results when a baby has difficulty controlling certain body functions, such as breathing. When a baby is put to sleep face down, the risk of SIDS increases. If you childsit a baby, check with the parents about how they put their baby to sleep.

Make the Connection

Childhood Illnesses
For more information on childhood illnesses and diseases, see page 491 in Lesson 45.

Mini-Review

1. List three characteristics of one-year-olds to three-year-olds.
2. Why is it wrong to shake an infant or toddler?

Reducing the Risk of SIDS

The following are the American Academy of Pediatrics' guidelines for reducing the risk of SIDS.

- Babies should sleep on their backs, not their stomachs.
- Make sure babies sleep on a firm surface, not on a waterbed, a soft mattress, a pillow, a fluffy blanket, or a comforter. Stuffed toys, pillows, and blankets should not be placed in the crib with babies.
- Babies should be kept warm, but not too warm. Keep their room at a temperature that feels comfortable to you.
- Babies should be kept in a smoke-free zone.
- If a baby seems sick, his or her doctor should be called right away. Babies need to receive their shots on schedule.
- Regular prenatal care also can help reduce the risk of SIDS. For the baby's well-being, the mother should not smoke or use alcohol or drugs during pregnancy.



Young Children

You need certain skills to provide responsible care for young children who are three to eight years old. A responsible child sitter never leaves a young child alone. A responsible child sitter never shakes or hits a young child. You need to consult a parent or guardian if a young child persists in a behavior you find difficult or inappropriate. Consult the list of Childsitter's Skills for the Care of Young Children, on this page, to make sure you have the necessary skills.

Did You Know?

Imaginations Four-year-olds have vivid imaginations.

How to Care for Young Children (Three to Eight Years)

Three- to five-year-old children share common characteristics, as do five- to eight-year-olds.

Three- to five-year-olds Children in this age range enjoy playing with friends and communicating with others. They like to learn numbers and play simple games. They like to be independent and do things for themselves. They like to learn new words and names for things. They can be very active and very aggressive.

Five- to eight-year-olds Children this age need to socialize with others besides family members. They want to be a part of conversations with family members. They usually have more self-confidence than do three- to five-year-olds. They like to ask questions about almost everything and are influenced by what adults say and do.

A Childsitter's Skills for the Care of Young Children

You know what to do when a child is afraid. You talk quietly with the child and show the child that you are not afraid. You find out exactly why the child is afraid. If an object frightens the child, you move it out of the child's sight. You give the child a favorite toy or stuffed animal to hold.

You know what to do if a child has a tantrum. You ask the parents or guardian ahead of time how to respond to a tantrum. You find out why the child is angry. You tell the child calmly that a tantrum is not appropriate or acceptable.

Four- to five-year-old children love to play with friends.



You tell the child that you will not pay attention to his or her wants until the tantrum stops. If it does not stop in a short amount of time, you tell the child that he or she will have a time out. **Time out** is a calming-down period of time. You tell the child that he or she may play again after becoming calm.

You know how to help a young child learn. You smile at the child. You talk to the child and play games with him or her. You use safe toys and games that interest the child.

You know what to do when a child refuses to go to bed. You find out if the child does not want to be left alone or is afraid of the dark. You read the child a story to help the child relax, or you sit and quietly talk to the child. You assure the child that you will be close by and will check on him or her again soon.

You know what to do if you think a young child is sick. You call the parents or guardian. You describe the signs and symptoms you have observed. You follow the parents' or guardian's instructions about what steps to take.

You know how to be safe around water. Watching a child around water requires 100 percent of your attention. In just a matter of seconds, a child can go from your sight and fall into a swimming pool. At a beach, a child can wander off and be lost in a crowd. Always be aware of where a child is.

You know how to be safe near streets. Children like to play outdoors whenever possible. A child can run into a street and be at risk.



◀ Young children enjoy learning new tasks.

Let a child know that running into a street is not allowed. Be nearby in case the child does not listen to you or obey you.

You know how to be aware of potential hazards. If a child rides a bike, make sure a helmet is worn. The child may tell you that he or she is not required to wear a helmet. However, your responsibility is to be sure the child is safe. Choose another activity that would not be a hazard.

You know to be aware of stray animals. When you are outdoors, you do not allow a child to approach a stray animal. You do not know which animals are friendly and which are not. Walk with the child in another direction if you notice an animal without an owner.

You know about having other friends around. You check with the child's parent or guardian about being allowed to get together with a friend who also is child-sitting.

Parents and guardians will not always allow this because it is easy to become sidetracked and then full attention is not given to the child. Remember, your first responsibility is to the child you are watching.

Did You Know?

Sleep Six-year-old children may need 10-12 hours of sleep to be at their best.

Mini-Review

1. What are three characteristics of three- to five-year-olds?
2. What is a time out?

SPEAKING OUT

Teens Talk About Health

Mericya Meza Childsitting

What's the single most important qualification to be a good child sitter? One experienced sitter, Mericya Meza, had a quick answer: "Patience, a whole lot of patience!" That patience has helped Mericya become a popular child sitter in her neighborhood and among her friends and relatives.

A teen in demand Mericya sits for younger cousins, nieces and nephews, and "all sorts of little neighbors" in her family's apartment complex several times a week. Most of her work is during the evening, so balancing sitting and studying can sometimes be a challenge.

The good and the bad Mericya remembered the babysitters she herself had as a young child. "The good ones seemed to have a lot of imagination," she said. "They knew what kinds of things kids liked, what they thought was fun."

As for the not-so-good sitters, Mericya remembers them expecting her to sit quietly in a chair. In her own child sitting jobs, Mericya tries to keep her experiences in mind. "One of the reasons I think sitting for younger kids is fun is because I play with them a lot. I like to do what they like to do. I like little kids," she added. "I get along with them pretty well."

Different challenges While sitting for infants has its own challenges, older children can be even tougher. She described why: "Older kids are just into more stuff, you know? After a while, having a lot of kids crying or just messing with things and breaking stuff, can really test your patience." But Mericya has another rule she always follows. "I don't yell at kids," she explained.

“ . . . sitting for younger kids is fun . . . because I play with them a lot. I like to do what they like to do.”

"They can get scared pretty easily, and they remember things like that the next time you come over."

Mericya relies on the fact that she is bilingual to help her in her child sitting duties.

Prepared for almost anything Although she's never had to deal with a serious injury or other emergency while babysitting, Mericya is prepared. She learned CPR and other first aid techniques. She also has learned from her own mom how to deal with the many bumps, bruises, and scrapes that are a part of growing up. "That's where a babysitting course could come in handy," she said. In fact, Mericya is thinking about becoming a children's nurse. "It's a way to help kids and their families when they really need help," said Mericya.



Journaling Activity

What do you think is the most important quality people who work with children need? Write a journal entry giving reasons for your opinion.

childdisitter
sudden infant death
syndrome (SIDS)
time out



Key Terms Review

Complete these fill-in-the-blank statements with the lesson Key Terms on the left. Do not write in this book.

- _____ is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant.
- A _____ is a person who provides short-term care for infants and children.
- If a child has a tantrum, he or she might need a _____.

Recalling the Facts

- What are three things you must do to be prepared to childdisit?
- List seven skills of a responsible childdisitter for infants and toddlers.
- What are the characteristics of newborns to one-year-olds?
- What are the characteristics of young children three to five years old?
- What emergency telephone numbers do you need to know if you are a childdisitter?
- What is shaken baby syndrome?
- Why put babies to sleep on their backs?
- What are two things you might do for a child who is afraid?
- What do each of the initials in SIDS mean?
- What should you do when a baby cries?
- What age baby does SIDS usually affect?
- When should a young child wear a helmet?
- What is your first responsibility when you childdisit?
- What is important when giving a baby a bottle?
- What may cause a child to have a tantrum?

Critical Thinking

- What are three reasons a parent or guardian might ask a childdisitter not to have visitors while childdisitting?
- In what ways do children benefit when they are cared for by a qualified, responsible childdisitter?
- Why is it important to end a child's tantrum?
- How might teens meet the qualifications of a responsible childdisitter if there are not any childdisitter courses available in their community?

Real-Life Applications

- Is it more difficult to childdisit for an infant or for a young child? List your reasons.
- Choose the three characteristics of a responsible childdisitter that you consider to be the most important. Give your reasons.
- Why do you think some teens think that childdisitting is an easy job?
- If your friend is a childdisitter and he or she thinks childdisitting is an easy job, how would you convince your friend that childdisitting is a serious job?

Activities

Responsible Decision Making

- Write** You are childdisitting for a baby. You are giving the baby a bath. The telephone rings. The phone is in the next room. What should you do and why? Write a paragraph in your journal on this topic. Refer to the Responsible Decision-Making Model on page 61 for help.

Sharpen Your Life Skills

- Use Communication Skills** You have learned skills for responsible childdisitting. Develop a pamphlet, including a cover, title, table of contents, and responsibilities of a childdisitter. Ask your teacher for permission to give a copy of your pamphlet to students who are interested in childdisitting.