

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY BULLETIN

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER

JUNE 2002

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 6

About The Resource Center

The NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center is a project of the Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Funding for the Resource Center originates with the Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant of USDHHS's Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau, awarded to the University under a contract from the Division of Public Health, NCDHHS.

The development, translating, printing, web posting and mailing of the *Health and Safety Bulletin* are supported by funding from the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant of the Child Care Bureau, Administration on Children and Families, USDHHS, through a contract between the Division of Child Development, NCDHHS, and the Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Caring for the Caregiver

As providing child care is a demanding and challenging job, it is especially important for all of those in caregiver roles to pay attention to caring for themselves. If you are a child care provider, your job means assuming a huge amount of responsibility and constantly attending to the needs of others. You are required to be patient, caring, creative, energetic, and consistent. In order to provide such constant nurturing to others, you need a means to nourish yourself and to insure that you don't become rundown. This issue of the North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Bulletin addresses ways that you can care for your own needs and protect yourself from stress, communicable diseases, injury, and exposure to toxic materials. Stress is the focus of much of this issue because stress can be so overwhelming and there are many positive ways to address stress. The suggestions included in this issue are initial steps toward these goals.

Manage Your Stress

Being a child care provider means having responsibilities. Having responsibilities means having stress in your life. And not all stress is negative. We feel stress when there are things we need to take care of but have been avoiding. Stress can be a motivator; it can provide the nudge we need to get those essential tasks completed. Sometimes we feel stress when facing or making important transitions and changes in our lives. Thus we can't, and don't even want to, avoid all stress. Rather, we need to learn to manage stress and minimize non-productive stress so that we don't feel overwhelmed and out of control of our lives.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take that can improve your coping skills and reduce your stress.



Prioritize

You always have a lot to do as a child care provider. There are records to keep, inspections to be carried out, daily planning of curriculum, cleaning tasks, diapering, food preparation, parent communication, and caring for children. But you are only one person, and you can't be everything to everyone. One way to avoid overload is to prioritize, to decide which tasks are most important today. Working with children requires you to be flexible so you can respond to immediate circumstances that might arise: a demanding child, a parent in distress, an absent co-worker.

Identify those tasks that are most important and take care of those first.

It is essential to identify your priorities. If you don't keep in mind what is most important, your efforts will usually be focused on the most immediate demands, which may not be those things that are critical or matter the most to you. If a distressed parent interrupts your classroom, make an appointment to meet with him at a later time. Remind him that now you are busy caring for the children. If you don't hold onto your own priorities, "the squeaky wheel may get the grease" while your really important goals are overlooked.



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Set Limits

A strategy to use to avoid getting overloaded is to set limits. Defining how you want to relate to other people will allow you to establish boundaries and keep from responding immediately to all the demands that come your way. Though you are a child care provider, you do not have to be a rescuer. For example you do not need to provide extra child care hours whenever a parent requests them. If you feel taken advantage of by other people, you are probably not setting enough limits. You may need to set limits with those parents who chronically ask you to provide extra services without prior arrangement and adequate compensation.

Setting adequate boundaries means that you are not taking on others' problems.

No matter how caring and compassionate you are, you cannot compensate for everyone else's difficulties without becoming overwhelmed. No matter how much you care and want to offer your support, you do not have to make others' problems into your problems. If you feel overly upset by others' difficulties or if their problems are disrupting your life, you may be too involved. If you feel that the extent of others' problems makes you feel manipulated, that you have no choice but to try to help others, or that you are guilty if you don't address the needs of others, you may need to assert yourself and set more limits.

Assert Yourself

In order to set limits, you must be able to assert yourself. Clearly, and firmly tell others what you need from them or what limits you are setting. Be polite but not apologetic. It is okay to say "no" when others ask you to do things that you can't do, don't want to do, or are beyond the limits of the services you provide. Sometimes, because of their own needs, others may not hear your needs, argue with the limits you set or attempt to manipulate you into doing what they want. Continue to clearly repeat your assertion (what you want) until it is heard. When you are being assertive, you are not being mean, aggressive, or inconsiderate of others' needs. You are just refusing to ignore your own needs and limits. You are taking care of yourself, so you will continue to have the energy to do your job well.

Having clear written program policies is one important way to set limits.

Use Appropriate Resources

As a child care provider, there may be times when you wish you could do more for some of the children in your care. But their needs may be beyond what you have to offer. Some children may need special services. Recommend community resources to parents when needed. Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency or the NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center if you need referral information.

In cases where you suspect neglect or abuse by a parent or guardian, report your suspicions to DSS (Department of Social Services). If you suspect abuse or neglect by a provider in your center, inform your director and report your suspicions to DSS and DCD (NC Division of Child Development).

You may find you are in a position to direct parents to resources to meet their personal needs. Parents often seek personal support from child care providers. They may share information about their personal lives, marriage, financial problems, or other family issues. It can be upsetting to hear about others' problems, and you may

be unable to provide the help that is needed. To set boundaries, help parents identify the appropriate resources to address their problems.

If you are feeling burdened by the emotional demands of your job, it is important to find someone to talk with about concerns that arise from your work. Maintain confidentiality by not disclosing information that would identify a child or family.

Find someone supportive to talk to.

Maximize Your Job Satisfaction

There are probably some specific reasons you chose to take on the job of child care provider. Do you love children, enjoy teaching, or did you need a job that allowed you more time at home with your own children? Are you getting enough of those benefits that motivated you to go into this field? Or do you find that so much of your time is required to satisfy other responsibilities and demands that you rarely get to do those things that you most enjoy? If



the latter description is a better fit, you may need to build on those features of your job that provide you benefits. Identify and limit those features that detract from your job satisfaction. Minimize the time you spend on non-essential tasks that you don't enjoy. Ask someone to do as many of these tasks as possible. The jobs you dislike the most may be those that are most satisfying to someone else.

Structure your day to include as many benefits and enjoyable tasks as possible.

Take Care of Yourself

You can't keep taking care of others unless you take care of yourself. Ideally, you should get plenty of sleep and exercise, eat a well balanced diet, and find time for relaxation and personal enjoyment. It sounds good but it is far from the reality of many busy child care providers who sacrifice sleep and eat

on the run in order to get everything done.

How do you take care of yourself without it becoming yet another stress?

First, remember that you are important. When you're defining your priorities, move yourself up on the list.

Second, let go of being perfect. It is better to take care of yourself a little than not at all. If you don't have time to get enough sleep, take a short "power nap" or put your feet up for ten minutes. If you don't have time for a full workout, take a short walk. And if you can't take that night off, at least take a little while for a hot bath, relaxation exercises, pleasure reading, listening to music, a quiet relaxing cup of tea, or some other means of enjoyment. Identify quick strategies to relax and take care of yourself and use them whenever you need a break or feel yourself becoming stressed.

Get Support

Working with children can be very satisfying. But you also need adult contact.

You need opportunities to talk about your concerns with other adults who can understand, empathize, and share the joys of your work, and provide support when needed.

Try to identify other child care providers with whom you can discuss work issues. Share your concerns and ideas. Seek out opportunities for continuing education and learn new skills that will help you to grow in your profession and provide an arena for meeting other caregivers.

*Article contributed by:
Meredith Mayer, PhD, Clinical Psychologist*

How Can Directors Help Caregivers to Reduce and Manage Stress?

- Provide ongoing training programs to ensure that all staff continue to learn about young children and develop their caregiving skills.
- Provide written job descriptions and personnel policies so staff are clear about the program's policies and their own responsibilities.
- Maintain a list of qualified substitutes so employees don't feel that they have to come in even when they are sick.
- Meet regularly as a staff to share feelings and concerns so staff feel

supported by supervisors and co-workers.

- Get input from the staff regarding how the program operates and involve them in decisions so that they feel that they have some control over their work environment.
- Recruit volunteers, provide training for them, and schedule them to assist during the busiest times of the day so staff can take breaks or provide individual attention to children. Volunteers should be screened and trained just like paid staff.
- Advocate for improved staff wages, paid overtime, an eight-hour work day and fringe benefits.
- Make sure that there is always someone on call so staff who feel overwhelmed by the demands of the job can take a break from the children.
- Provide a pleasant, comfortable place with adult-size furniture for staff to use on breaks so that their time away from children is relaxing.

Reference: *Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina*

What Steps Can Caregivers Take to Stay Healthy?

1. Things you do for yourself
 - Eat a balanced diet
 - Exercise regularly
 - Get enough sleep
 - Manage Stress
2. Things you do at work: minimize chances of getting infectious diseases
 - Assess any conditions that may impair caregiver's ability to perform the job assigned
 - Wash your hands
 - Help children wash hands
 - Take necessary precautions when treating sick or injured child
 - Stay home and take care of yourself when you are sick
 - Enforce sick child policy
3. Things the health care provider can do for you
 - Give an annual physical examination
 - Give vision, hearing, and TB screenings
 - Give necessary immunizations and vaccines
 - Diphtheria
 - Measles
 - Rubella
 - Hepatitis B
 - Pneumococcus
 - Tetanus
 - Mumps
 - Influenza
 - Polio

How Can Caregivers Minimize the Chances of Being Injured?

Use safe techniques for lifting, reaching, carrying, bending, and sitting on small furniture and on the floor.

Major principles of lifting:

- Maintain normal spine curves, i.e., neck curve inward, upward back curve outward and lower back curve inward.
- Keep the center of gravity over the base of support.
- Use a wide base of support.
- Use the stronger muscles first, i.e., back/leg muscles.
- Keep the child or object as close to your body as possible.
- Avoid twisting or jerking motions.

Specific recommendations when lifting in child care settings:

- Use proper lifting technique when lifting children off floor, in and out of cribs, highchairs, etc., and on/off of nap cots and changing tables.
- Squat when working at low counters, tables and sinks.
- Do not lean back too far when reaching for toys or food from high shelves.
- Use proper sitting posture when seated on floor, i.e., back in normal curves; use support when possible such as furniture or a wall to lean on.
- Encourage independence in children whenever possible. Is all lifting and carrying really necessary? Utilize stairs up to changing tables.
- If it is difficult getting up from a squatting position, use a stable surface (table, chair) for support and push up with hands in addition to legs.
- To lower a child or object to the floor, use the same mechanics in reverse order. Have a firm grasp on the child or object, place feet as wide apart as your shoulders, one foot ahead, and keep the back straight as legs are bent to lower the object. Extend arms straight down; do not rotate the trunk.



Prevent Exposure to Toxic Materials

What materials are possibly toxic in the child care facility? Art materials, disinfectants and cleaning supplies pose the greatest hazard for exposure in child care facilities. Water-based and non-toxic paints and markers can replace paints containing lead as well as permanent markers that contain toxic solvents. Using wet, rather than powdered clays will eliminate exposure to silica, a substance that is easily inhaled and harmful to the lungs. Cleaning supplies are so readily used by adults in the child care setting



that staff may overlook the need to find non-toxic alternatives for adults who come in frequent contact with these materials.

Regulations developed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) require the use of

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) to identify hazardous materials and provide instructions for safe use of the materials. Hazardous materials used regularly in child care, such as bleach, should have the MSDS on file for staff education on safe use of the product. For example, the MSDS for a product may recommend using safety goggles or protective gloves to avoid injuries when handling the product. The MSDS sheet also includes proper first aid if exposure occurs. It is listed under the health hazard data section. When possible, carefully choose the products you plan to use, file the MSDS sheets for these products, and use these products exclusively. Changing products frequently requires constant updating and monitoring of MSDS sheets. The safest way to avoid exposure to toxic materials is by eliminating them or substituting less hazardous products.

For more information about occupational risks and OSHA regulations, go to the OSHA website, www.osha.gov, or call NC OSHA at 1-800-522-6762.



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For more information:

www.nc_aeyc.org or call 1.800.982.4406



June is

National Trauma Awareness Month
National Cancer Survivors Day
North American Occupational Safety and Health Week
Vision Research Month

June 2 – 8: National Headache Awareness Week

June 10 – 16: National Men's Health Week

June 16: Father's Day

June 23 – 29: Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week

June 27 – July 5: Eye Safety Awareness Week

July is

June 1 – July 4: Fireworks Safety Month

July 1 – 7: World Breastfeeding Week

July 1 – 7: National Therapeutic Recreation Week

August is

National Immunization Awareness Month
Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month
Cataract Awareness Month

parent



saabed

Stress has become a household word in today's culture. We all experience stress from time to time, but families with young children can be particularly affected. Parents may experience lifestyle changes, higher demands on their time, greater financial stress and lack of sleep when children are born. Career demands and the need for child care can also be stressful for new parents. Adults in every walk of life can benefit from knowing and practicing techniques to reduce stress in their lives.

It is also important for parents to recognize that child care

providers experience stress of their own. Many factors can contribute to the stress level in a child care setting.

- Tension between families and caregivers
- Child/staff ratios that don't allow staff to sufficiently tend to children's individual needs
- Noise
- Immediacy of the needs of the children
- Low wages
- Inadequate benefits

How Parents Can Help Caregivers

- ❑ **Be a good communicator.** Let your caregiver know if you are not coming on a given day, if you will arrive late in the morning, if your child did not sleep well last night, if something important has happened in your family, etc.
- ❑ **Respect program policies.** Read, understand, and respect written policies of the program including hours of operation, sick child policies, supplies you are expected to bring (diapers, change of clothes, blankets...), scope of the services provided, and holiday/vacation schedules.
- ❑ **Notice their work.** Caregivers work hard all day with your child. They keep records, communicate daily activities, display children's artwork and projects, and send children's work home. Take the time to notice, ask questions, comment.
- ❑ **Offer support.** There are many ways to offer support. Not every parent can come into the child care program for reading time or a party. But most families can offer some type of support — a special snack or pizza party, art supplies, books to share, photos from a vacation or a collection of shells from a beach trip.
- ❑ **Say "thank you!"** Thank you goes a long way. It can be said in so many ways — in words, a note, flowers, bubble bath, tea, coupon for dinner out . . . — Caregivers need to hear that their work is appreciated.

How Caregivers Can Help Parents

- ❑ **Be a good communicator.** Find ways to communicate with families about their children's daily activities, behavior, emerging skills and accomplishments.
- ❑ **Be clear in your expectations.** Develop written program policies that help parents understand the services you offer and how your program operates.
- ❑ **Be prepared.** Be ready in the morning when the child arrives and have belongings ready in the afternoon for pick up. Be sensitive to parents' need to be on time for work and their need to attend to their families' evening schedule.
- ❑ **Be reliable.** Have a plan to provide continuity of care when a primary caregiver is absent that is comfortable for the child and the parents.
- ❑ **Thank them.** Let parents know when they are doing things that help you and thank them. Thank you goes a long way with parents, too.



1.800.246.6731

"Stress" Inventory

Are you vulnerable to stress? We have all heard that we can learn ways to help simplify our lives and to manage our stress. By completing this "stress" inventory, rating each item from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), according to how much of the time each statement applies to you, we can take a closer look on how stress effects our lives.

- _____ 1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.
- _____ 2. I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
- _____ 3. I give and receive affection regularly.
- _____ 4. I have at least one relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.
- _____ 5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice per week.
- _____ 6. I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
- _____ 7. I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks per week.
- _____ 8. I am the appropriate weight for my height.
- _____ 9. I have an income adequate to meet my basic needs.
- _____ 10. I get strength from my religious beliefs.
- _____ 11. I regularly attend club or social activities.
- _____ 12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
- _____ 13. I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
- _____ 14. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, and teeth).
- _____ 15. I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
- _____ 16. I have regular conversations with the people I live with about problems.
- _____ 17. I do something for fun at least once a week.
- _____ 18. I am able to organize my time effectively
- _____ 19. I drink fewer than three cups of caffeinated coffee, tea, or cola a day.
- _____ 20. I take quiet time for myself during the day.

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20.

Over 30 = vulnerable to stress

50 – 75 = seriously vulnerable to stress

Over 75 = extremely vulnerable to stress

Developed by psychologists Lyle H. Miller and Alma Dell Smith of Boston University Medical Center.



More Stress Management Techniques

- Keep a sense of humor
- Go with the flow — Be flexible!
- Practice positive "self-talk" — Discard negative beliefs.
- Practice optimism and positive expectancy.
 - HOPE is a muscle. Use it!
 - "Worry is a misuse of imagination."

Content developed by Judy Sowerby of NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center, and Sonya Reid of Wake County Health Department.



Stress Reduction Techniques and Ideas for Adults

Exercise. Just 10 minutes three times a week can help. Gradually build to 30 minutes every other day.

Strengthen or establish a support network. Studies continually show that people who remain happy and healthy despite many life stresses have very good networks of social support.

Professional help and medications. Stress can be a factor in a variety of mental and emotional illnesses and should be professionally treated. Often short-term therapy can reduce stress-related emotional problems.

Relaxation techniques. These are methods of invoking the relaxation response, the natural unwinding of the stress response. There are different types.

- **Deep breathing exercises.** These are done to reverse the shallow, rapid breathing that occurs during distress. Simply taking a few deep breaths will help.
- **Muscle relaxation.** Alternately tensing and relaxing individual muscles from head to toe, along with deep breathing is an especially good method to relax for sleep.
- **Guided imagery.** The process of using words (narration) to paint vivid pictures in the mind of the listener that describe a pleasant, relaxing place/experience.

Meditation. The goal of meditation is to relax and quiet the mind. Proven repeatedly to be an excellent stress management technique, it is also easy to do.

- **Mindful meditation.** This particular technique focuses on breathing while employing the basics of meditation.
- **Transcendental meditation.** This form of meditation uses a "mantra" and focuses on the senses.

Biofeedback. Electric leads are taped to a subject's head so that brain waves can be measured while the person relaxes using a relaxation technique such as those listed above. A sound is emitted from a machine when deep relaxation is achieved. By repeating the process, a person can learn to associate the sound with a relaxed state and learn to achieve it more easily.

Massage therapy. This technique of manipulating muscles and applying pressure to certain parts of the body slows down the heart rate, relaxes the body, and actually increases alertness.

- **Swedish massage.** Uses muscle manipulation.

- **Shiatsu.** Uses intense pressure to parts of the body.
- **Reflexology.** Manipulates acupuncture points in the hands and feet.

Yoga. The integration of the body, mind, and spirit. Yoga is a tool for physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being. At least 40 different techniques exist which include gentle stretching, breathing, meditation and guided relaxation.

Proper Nutrition. A healthful diet has been proven to increase the



body's ability to fight stress and reduce disease.

Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques. These are among the most effective methods to reduce stress. Steps include:

- 1) identifying the source of stress,
- 2) restructuring priorities,
- 3) changing one's response to stress,
- 4) and finding methods for managing and reducing stress.

There are a variety of services and materials to help follow through with some of these techniques. Classes are available at spas and health clubs, videos and books are available in the self help sections of book stores and health food stores, psychologists are listed in the yellow pages as are health spas and gyms.

Additional reading on stress in child care:

Articles from NAEYC's journal, "Young Children"

White, B.P. with M.A. Phair. (1986). *It'll be a challenge. Managing emotional stress in teaching disabled children.* Young Children, 41(2): 44-48.

These teachers chronicle the emotions they faced when three children with disabilities joined their kindergarten classroom.

Manning, D., S. E. Rubin, H. G. Perdigao, R. G. Gonzalez, & P. Schindler. (1996). *A "worry doctor" for preschool directors and teachers: A collaborative model.* Young Children, 51(5): 68-73.

This article describes collaborative programs between early childhood educators and mental health professionals to provide help dealing with their stress.

Gruenberg, Ann. (1998). *Creative Stress Management: "Put Your Own Oxygen Mask on First."* Young Children, 53(1): 38-42.

The author discusses how early childhood professionals can manage the stress they face.

Galinsky, E. (1988). *Parent and teacher-care-givers: Sources of tension, sources of support.* Young Children, 43(3): 4-12.

When parents and teachers meet at the end of the day, often both are stressed. This article reports the sources of stresses for both groups and gives strategies for teachers to work with parents.

McCloskey, C. M. (1996). *Taking positive steps toward classroom management in preschool: Loosening up without letting it all fall apart.* Young Children, 51(3): 14-16.

The author suggests eight steps for positive classroom management.

DeBord, K. (1993). *A little respect and eight more hours in the day: Family child care providers*

have special needs. Young Children, 48(4): 21-26.

This article stresses that sufficient attention to professional development needs and cooperative planning of training opportunities must take place for family child care providers.

Sturm, C. (1997). *Creating Parent-Teacher Dialogue: Intercultural Communication in Child Care.* Young Children, 52 (5): 34-38.

When teachers in a cultural diverse area realized that some of their assumptions clashed with the cultural background of the children in their care, they began a parent-teacher dialogue project. This article discusses this project.

Soderman, A.K. (1985). *Dealing with difficult young children: Strategies for teachers and parents.* Young Children, 40 (5): 15-20.

This article is a review of research on personality development and a summary of personality types. It also has strategies for parents and teachers for dealing with difficult children.

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National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants. (2002-draft). *Caring for the Health of Child Care Staff.* Training Module, UNC School of Public Health, Chapel Hill, NC.

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina. (2000). *"How to Manage Stress"*. Raleigh, NC.

HEALTH BULLETIN

VOL. 2 ISSUE 6

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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This publication is produced by the North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center and distributed to licensed child care facilities, CCR&R agencies, Smart Smart partnerships, DCD child care consultants, and child care health consultants throughout North Carolina.

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www.healthychildcarenc.org

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Health Resources & Services Administration
Maternal & Child Health Bureau

10,000 copies of this document were printed at a cost of \$.46 per copy

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NC Child Care Health & Safety Resource Center

1100 Wake Forest Road, Suite 100
Raleigh, NC 27604

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Babies Get Outdoors!

Outdoor Learning Environments for Infants and Toddlers

Summer months are wonderful for taking children outdoors. Infants and toddlers enjoy the change of scene and the abundance of the outdoors as we all do. It is so important to plan time to spend outdoors with younger children. When working with a group of infants whose sleep schedules vary, going outdoors can be a challenge without resting places for babies who need to rest. Because young babies take many short naps, it is helpful to have safe resting places. An outdoor play pen, a stroller that reclines, a thick soft blanket or quilt in a shaded space on a grassy lawn can provide a resting place.

Just as you pay attention to safety indoors, you should pay attention to safety outdoors as well. Keeping the "back to sleep" slogan in mind, make sure the places allow the baby to be placed on their back. Pillows and toys are not recommended in the sleeping space of young infants. As cribs are required to have rails spaced 2 3/8" apart, this should apply to all sleeping arrangements. Babies should never be placed on a surface from which they could roll off or

fall. If flying insects are a problem, it is a good idea to provide netting (such as a mosquito net) to protect a resting baby. The resting place should be protected from the activity of other children but in close proximity of the active group so that a caregiver can easily observe and monitor both the resting child and the active group.

Shade and temperature are important to consider when going outdoors with infants. Infants do not develop the ability to perspire, the body's mechanism for cooling itself off, until about six months of age. Make sure the young infant does not become overheated. This does not mean babies should be kept indoors in air conditioning all day. It is healthy for them to be outdoors and in the fresh air. But they do need shady cool places to be, enough water and liquids to drink, and ways to cool down if it is really hot. Perhaps the day provides a nice breeze, or a caregiver may use a water sprinkler or cool wet

Continued on Side B



Activities for Infants and Toddlers Outdoors

Fun Things to Kick — Good for age 4 months and up

Materials

- Objects that make interesting noises when kicked, such as manufactured crib gym
- Soft small toys suspended from wooden or plastic rod
- Hanging beach toys

To Do

- Place the child on her back on the floor. Suspend the crib gym or toys within reach of her feet. Jiggle them a little to bring interest.

Observations

- Does the child kick out at the dangling objects?
- Is she interested in watching them move?
- Does she repeat kicks?

More Ideas

- Hang different things from time to time.

Emerging Skill

- This activity encourages babies to kick at surfaces placed at their feet.

Caution

- Remove dangling object if baby goes to sleep. Do not have toys or crib gym suspended over sleeping baby.

Continued from **Side A**

cloth to keep a baby comfortable. Timing of outdoor play can also help with sun and heat exposure. Certainly, it is usually not as hot in the early morning and late afternoon hours as it is midday.

Shade can be provided in a number of ways. Trees provide shade and so much more: colors, textures, movement, sounds when the wind blows, and they bring in wildlife (birds, squirrels, butterflies, . . .) to observe. Tall plants and shrubs also can provide shady areas in the play yard. Arbors constructed with vines growing over the tops, an awning, a tarp, or a canopy can be used to shade a play/resting place. Shade is essential in these hot months to prevent overheating and overexposure to sun. Infants and toddlers must be protected from sun to prevent sunburn. Discuss with parents your plan for outdoor time. Ask them to provide sunscreen and a lightweight hat for their child. Remember to have a medical release slip signed for the use of the sunscreen.

Reference:

Miller, Karen. (1999). *Simple Steps: Developing Activities for Infants, Toddlers, and Two Year Olds*. Gryphon House: Beltsville, MD.



Activities for Infants and Toddlers Outdoors

Under-Inflated Beach Toys — Good for age 6 months and up

Materials

- Large plastic inflatable beach toy such as a beach ball, swim ring, or inflated animal.

To Do

- Blow up these toys so that they are still soft. This makes them easier for small hands to grasp.
- Place the child on the floor with these toys.

Observations

- What does the child do with these large, bright objects?
- Does he crawl over them?
- Does he pick them up with two hands or with one hand?

- Does she roll on her back and drag them on top of herself?

Safety

- Do not use balloons, which can pop and cause choking if the child puts the rubber in her mouth.

More Ideas

- Fully inflate the beach toys from time to time. They will act differently as the child plays with them.

Emerging skill

- The child will practice various motor skills as she picks up these large, light objects.