



# Safe Food for Babies and Children: A Guide for Babysitters

**- BABYSITTER EDITION -**

Babysitting is a great way to earn money, help neighbors and gain job experience. It's a big responsibility, too. When parents trust you to babysit, they are placing their children's health and safety in your hands. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to foodborne illness and even a small error in food preparation could cause severe illness. Read on to learn more about what jobs to accept, how to handle emergencies and how to be safe in the kitchen when preparing and serving food.

## Accepting a job offer

- Only accept jobs from people you know or who have been referred by a friend and/or approved by a parent or guardian.
- Make sure your parents know where you are babysitting. Leave the address and phone number of your job site. Tell someone at your home what time to expect you back.
- Find out what time the parents expect to be home. Ask them to call if it will be much later.
- Make sure you have an escort home.

## On-The-Job Safety

- Obtain the address and phone number of where the parents will be.
- Obtain phone numbers for emergency services, such as the police, fire department and poison control center.
- Ask if the children have any special needs, allergies or necessary medications.
- Never open the door to strangers.
- Make sure you stay with the children at all times.
- Make sure all doors and windows are locked.
- Ask about the location of first aid supplies and any needed cooking equipment or utensils.
- If there is an alarm system, learn how to use it.
- Call a trusted adult or the police if you feel uneasy or suspicious about something you see or hear.
- Do not invite a friend over unless it is OK'd by the parents.



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## Food Safety

- Hand washing is important! Remember to wash with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, before feeding infants and children and after changing diapers and using the restroom.
- Wash eating areas with warm, soapy water.
- Keep perishable foods in the refrigerator.
- Watch infants and young children when they are eating. Eating while walking, running or laughing may lead to a choking incident.
- Avoid feeding children less than 5 years old any food that is small, round and hard, such as hot dogs, whole grapes, candy, popcorn, peanuts, raw carrots, fruit seeds, apple chunks and gum. For more information on choking, see “Safe Food for Infants and Children: Choking Dangers (FN664),” an NDSU Extension publication.
- Keep dish soap, laundry detergent and other household cleaning supplies out of children’s reach to avoid accidental poisoning.
- Ask the parents for specific instructions on how to safely prepare baby bottles and food.

## Kitchen Safety

If you’re asked to prepare food, keep these tips in mind.

- Always keep young children and pets away from cooking areas.
- Keep knives and other sharp objects out of children’s reach. Never put knives or sharp objects into a full sink as someone could reach in and get cut.
- Keep electrical appliances away from water and operate with dry hands to avoid electrical shock.
- Make sure paper towels, dishtowels and potholders are kept away from the stovetop to prevent a fire.
- Never leave cooking unattended. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off all appliances and remove pots or pans from the stovetop.
- Avoid burns by keeping hot pots, pans and other kitchen or household objects out of children’s reach. Always turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.

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For more information about nutrition and food safety, visit the NDSU Extension website:

**[www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food)**