

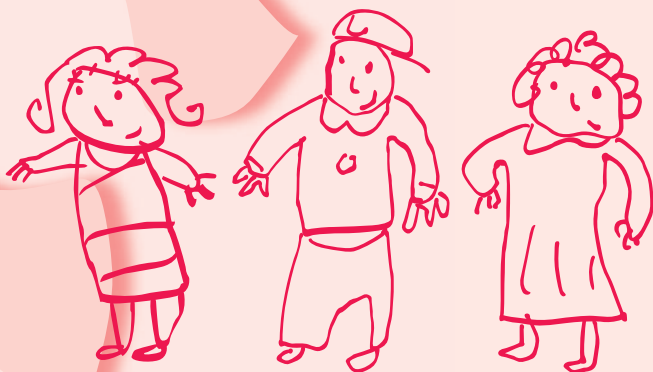


Resources  
for  
**Child  
Caring**

*Advancing quality  
care and education  
of children in their  
crucial early years.*

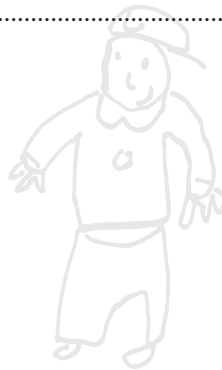
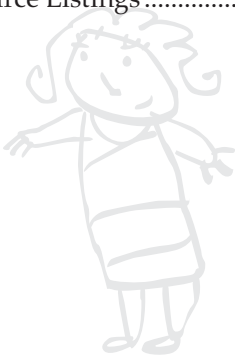
# Taking Care Of Our Children

*Resource Guide for Family, Friends,  
and Neighbors Who Care for Children*



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## Do you take care of children in your family? Or children of close friends or neighbors?

*If YES, then this booklet is for you!*

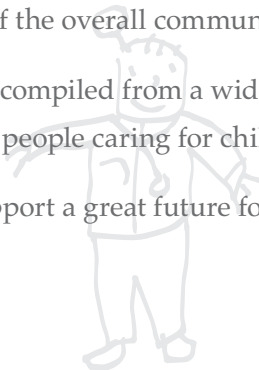
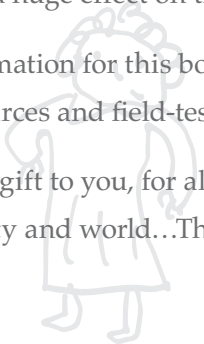
Whether you are taking care of just one child on occasion or several children on a regular basis, you are creating a lasting legacy through the choices you make during that time.

Even if you are “just watching the kids,” “babysitting,” or “spending time with your grandbabies,” this is important time. Children in your care are watching you, listening to you, and learning a great deal from you.

From newborn infants to young teens, these children depend on you and the other adults in their lives to keep them safe and healthy, to look out for their best interests, and to show them how to interact with the world around them in a way that will bring them joy and success. They are getting messages from you about their own value in the world, how to get their wants and needs fulfilled, and how to treat others. From the big things to the little things you do, the impact you have on the life of a child can reach far into the future and have a huge effect on the well-being of the overall community.

Information for this booklet has been compiled from a wide variety of sources and field-tested by real-life people caring for children.

It is a gift to you, for all you do, to support a great future for our community and world...Thank you!



To do your best with the children in your care, it is especially important to take good care of yourself. When you are healthy, relaxed, and well-rested, you are much better able to do the following:

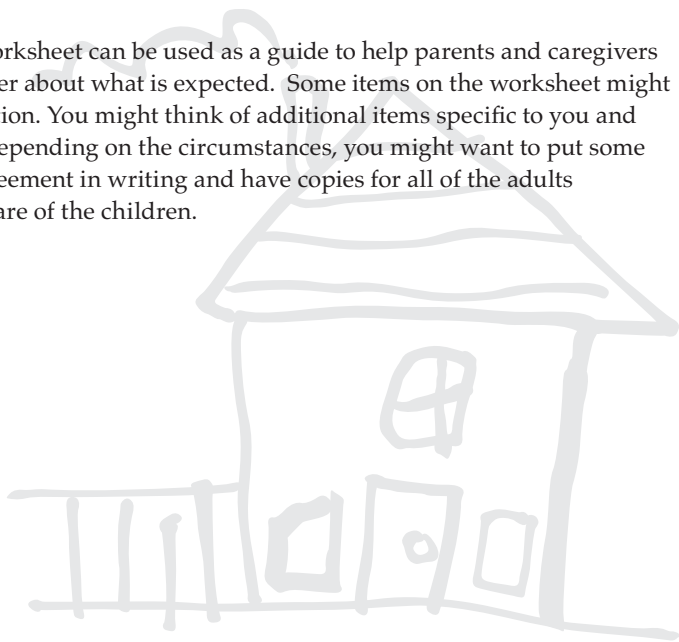
- ◆ build special relationships with each child in your care;
- ◆ provide a safe, healthy, learning space for children;
- ◆ have an open, honest relationship with the children and other adults in their lives;
- ◆ provide an environment where children can grow and blossom according to their social, physical, cultural and emotional needs;
- ◆ meet scheduling needs for care of children;
- ◆ access resources for the children in your care;
- ◆ communicate clearly with everyone involved in the care of the children.

Your work with children is extremely important to the well-being of the community. Please take care of yourself!!!

### **Communication Between Adults**

Good communication between all of the adults in a child's life helps everyone involved. It is important to communicate clearly about what is expected on all sides to avoid bad feelings between friends and family members and/or disruption in child care arrangements. Many times, everyone thinks they understand what agreement has been made, but when details are not discussed, conflict arises.

The following worksheet can be used as a guide to help parents and caregivers talk to one another about what is expected. Some items on the worksheet might not fit your situation. You might think of additional items specific to you and your situation. Depending on the circumstances, you might want to put some parts of your agreement in writing and have copies for all of the adults involved in the care of the children.



**Questions To Ask/Answer**

- ◆ Who are the children I will be caring for? What are their ages?
- ◆ What days and times will I be caring for the children?
- ◆ How will any changes to this schedule be handled? (For example, if the parent will be late?)
- ◆ Will I be paid or receive any other material benefits? (Lodging? Food?)
- ◆ If so, how much? Is this based on an hourly wage? Weekly? Monthly?
- ◆ Will the following be provided by parents or me?  
Diapers \_\_\_ Formula \_\_\_ Snacks \_\_\_ Meals \_\_\_
- ◆ Is it okay to contact parents at work? Any limitations?
- ◆ What time should naps and/or bedtime occur?
- ◆ Are there any rituals or traditions that should be observed?
- ◆ Are there any subjects that should not be discussed with the children or in their presence?
- ◆ Are TV shows and/or movies allowed? If so, what?
- ◆ Are there any foods or drinks that the children should not have? Or limits on any of them?
- ◆ Is it okay for other children to be present?
- ◆ Is it okay for other adults to be present?
- ◆ Is it okay if I have someone else watch the children?
- ◆ Is it okay to take the children to other places? If yes, are there any places they shouldn't go?
- ◆ What about transportation? Car seats?

**Knowing the Children:**

- ◆ Favorite books or stories \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Favorite games \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Favorite toys \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Favorite activities \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Favorite foods \_\_\_\_\_

**Health**

- ◆ Allergies \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Medications: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Other Health Info: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Important numbers:

- ◆ Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Other Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Child/Children's Doctor \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Insurance Information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ Special Instructions \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## In Case of Emergency, Dial 911

Provide the operator with the following information:

- ◆ The language that you speak best
- ◆ What sort of help you need (Ambulance? Fire? Police?)
- ◆ Your location/address \_\_\_\_\_
- ◆ If someone is hurt, give their age and describe the injury

## *Medical Release and Permission Statement*

In case of an emergency, I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to provide first aid care that is necessary.

If I/we cannot be reached, the person listed above has permission to make decisions regarding any emergency care that is necessary for my child/children,

\_\_\_\_\_.

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## *Home Safety Checklist*

### **Poisons**

- ◆ Keep dangerous products locked up and plants out of reach.
- ◆ Keep products in their original containers.
- ◆ Use child resistant containers.
- ◆ Have Syrup of Ipecac available-contact Poison Control before use.

### **Fire and Burn Safety**

- ◆ Install a smoke detector.
- ◆ Develop and practice a fire escape plan.
- ◆ Keep hot foods, liquids, pans and appliances out of reach.
- ◆ Buy only flame-resistant sleepwear for children.
- ◆ Teach children the meaning of hot and the danger of playing with matches.

### **Electrical Cords and Outlets**

- ◆ Install plastic plugs in outlets.
- ◆ Have frayed cords and loose plugs repaired and keep cords out of reach.

### **Falls**

- ◆ Never leave an infant unattended in a high place.
- ◆ Tack down loose carpeting and remove objects children can trip over.
- ◆ Secure doors and gates that lead to stairs.
- ◆ Put locks on windows above the first floor.

### **Choking**

- ◆ Keep rubber balloons away from children 3 or younger.
- ◆ Make sure plastic bags, cords, harnesses and soft pillows are out of reach.
- ◆ Do not let infants suck or chew on small objects.

### **Toys**

- ◆ Buy toys that are age-appropriate.
- ◆ Read safety messages.
- ◆ Pick up toys after play.

### Home Playground Equipment

- ◆ Make sure gymsets and playground equipment are installed on a soft surface at least six feet from any obstruction.
- ◆ See that equipment is anchored firmly down.
- ◆ Cover any exposed bolts or screws.
- ◆ Fence your yard and always supervise children outside.

### Bicycles

- ◆ Teach children traffic rules.
- ◆ Check that bikes are the proper size for the rider.
- ◆ Make sure that children wear bike helmets every time they ride.

### Water and Bath Safety

- ◆ Never leave a child in or near water unattended.
- ◆ Teach children, at least 3 years old, to swim.
- ◆ Check water temperature.
- ◆ Place non-skid mats or adhesive strips on bottom of tub or shower.

### Furniture

- ◆ Cover sharp edges and corners.
- ◆ Make sure furniture is not covered with lead paint.
- ◆ Cribs and playpens should be sturdy and have bars spaced no more than  $2\frac{3}{8}$ " apart.
- ◆ Make sure high chairs have restraining straps, a securely locking tray and good stability.
- ◆ Check to see that toy chest has lid that cannot fall down and lock.

### Other Dangers

- ◆ Keep scissors, knives and other sharp objects out of reach.
- ◆ Pick up small objects like beads and buttons off the floor.

Basic First Aid and CPR Classes are offered in many languages. Everyone who regularly cares for children can benefit from having this information, even if you do not need the certificate for your work. Contact Resources for Child Caring at (651) 641-3549 for class options.

### First Aid Kit Checklist

The following items should be included and checked monthly for adding or replacing contents.

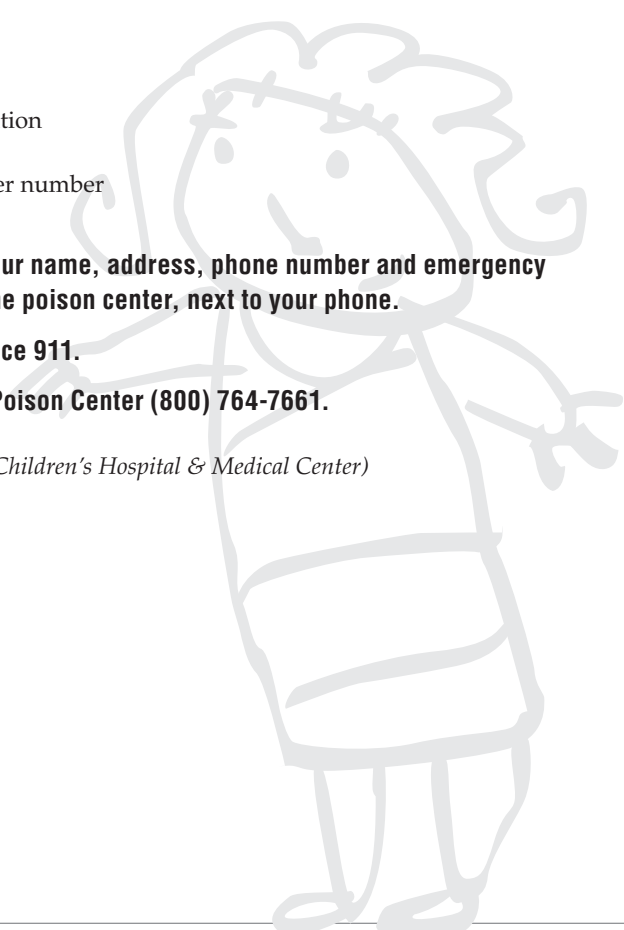
- ◆ Disposable gloves
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Sealed packages of alcohol/antiseptic wipes
- ◆ Tweezers
- ◆ Thermometer
- ◆ Bandage tape
- ◆ Sterile gauze pads
- ◆ Flexible roller gauze
- ◆ Triangular bandages
- ◆ Safety pins
- ◆ Eye dressing
- ◆ Syrup of Ipecac
- ◆ Soap
- ◆ Cold pack
- ◆ Insect sting preparation
- ◆ First aid guide
- ◆ Poison control center number

**REMEMBER! Keep your name, address, phone number and emergency numbers, including the poison center, next to your phone.**

**Police, Fire, Ambulance 911.**

**Minnesota Regional Poison Center (800) 764-7661.**

*(Checklist adapted from Children's Hospital & Medical Center)*



**C**hild abuse can occur in many forms- physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect. All of these are extremely harmful. Sometimes an abuser might think what they are doing is okay because the child is not visibly harmed. However, all of these actions cause damage, even when it cannot be seen. If you aren't sure whether something is child abuse, you can call 1-800-CHILDREN.

Examples of abuse include:

- ◆ hitting, pinching, or biting a child hard enough to leave a mark
- ◆ pushing a child into a wall or knocking him/her to the floor
- ◆ calling a child mean names or telling the child that he/she is worthless, stupid, "a mistake," and/or should never have been born
- ◆ touching a child's private parts when there is no good reason to do so
- ◆ asking a child to touch his/her own or someone else's private parts
- ◆ not giving a child enough food or water
- ◆ leaving a child home alone when he/she is too young (generally, under the age of 11)
- ◆ leaving or locking a child in a room alone for several hours at a time

### **Domestic Violence**

Even when children are not the target of abuse, they can be damaged by witnessing the abuse of a parent or caregiver. Girls who frequently witness violence in their home are much more likely to be victims of domestic violence as adults. Boys in these situations are much more likely to act violently, be injured or killed in disputes, and/or spend time in prison as adults. If you are being abused by someone in your family, please get help so that you and the children in your care can be safe and healthy.

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

If you think a child is being abused, it is important to get help. If you do not get help, the child could be killed or permanently damaged, and you will regret not taking action. If you don't want to give your name or contact information, you can make an anonymous or confidential report. If you are afraid to make a report because you think that you, the child, or the family will be harmed by doing so, you can still call and get more information about what can be done to protect the child. You can ask questions without making a report at 1-800-CHILDREN.

### ***When You Need Help...***

Most everyone who cares for children gets frustrated and angry at times. Children can push limits to the point that you might feel like doing something that could hurt them. If you are at the end of your rope, or even if you just need some ideas about how to make caring for children less stressful and more pleasant, you can call the Boys & Girls Town National Hotline, 24-hours a day, (800) 448-3000. They can provide interpretation and have TTY capability.

### **NEVER Shake A Baby or Child!!!**

Sometimes babies just won't stop crying. It can be hard on the people caring for them not to lose patience. Frustrated caregivers will sometimes try to make a baby stop crying by shaking him/her. This is very dangerous!!! Just one short round of shaking a baby or toddler can cause brain damage that might lead to death, blindness, hearing loss, or other lifelong disabilities. Everyone who cares for babies and toddlers should be informed of this danger to prevent a tragedy from occurring.

### **What to do when a baby won't stop crying, even though he/she is fed and dry:**

- ◆ First of all, take deep breaths and calm yourself, so that your stress won't make the baby more upset.
- ◆ Rock the baby gently or go for a walk or ride in stroller or car.
- ◆ Hold the baby firmly on your shoulder or lap and GENTLY pat his/her back
- ◆ Try to imagine what the baby is feeling and tell him/her over and over again that you understand and are here to keep him/her safe.
- ◆ Try a wind-up infant swing or bouncy seat.
- ◆ Lay the baby in a crib or other safe place, close the door, turn-up the radio and do something you want to do.
- ◆ Run the vacuum, the hair dryer, or the washing machine.
- ◆ Put the baby in a backpack and vacuum slowly and rhythmically.
- ◆ Put the baby's bouncy chair or seat near the dishwasher or tumble drier (making sure she is safe and not left unattended).
- ◆ Take baby in the bathroom and run the shower.

If the baby continues to cry and you feel frustrated, call a relative or friend for support, or contact a professional for guidance.

### **Positive Discipline**

Some people feel that the only way to teach children how to behave correctly is to hit them. There are resources that can help you find other ways to discipline a child that might be more effective and less likely to be considered abusive. Contact Prevent Child Abuse MN at (651) 523-0099.

Children are learning and developing skills for social interactions right from the start. From birth, they begin forming relationships and developing ways of getting along with others. They also begin learning about the power of emotions and feelings. These discoveries are influenced by the social and cultural expectations and practices of the family, other adults in their lives and the broader community.

Emotions and feelings are very real for both children and adults. Emotions and feelings carry energy and have a purpose in our lives. When adults help children recognize and name their own feelings and manage their response to those feelings, the adults contribute to children's inner sense of self-direction and confidence.

The goals that families have for their children depend largely on culture and value systems. With that in mind, here are some tips to consider when caring for a child or children:

- ◆ Be aware of your own emotions and feelings as well as the emotions and feelings of the children in your care.
- ◆ Be a good listener. Pay attention to what children say about how they are thinking, feeling, and seeing in their different environments.
- ◆ Help children recognize and give words to express their feelings.
- ◆ Encourage children to talk about these feelings with you or others. Try not to judge the child for what he/she is feeling. For example, if a child is sad about something that does not seem important to you, talk about the sadness and try to share with the child a situation in which you felt sad, instead of telling the child he/she should not be sad. Talk about how you handled your sad feelings when you had them.
- ◆ Model examples of positive ways to express emotions and behavior. You can do this when you are having emotions and talk about it aloud with the child. For example, "I'm feeling very angry because of something the lady from the phone company said to me. I even have feelings like I want to scream or hit something. I think I need to take some deep breaths and stand outside for a moment."
- ◆ "Feel what you want, control what you do." Help the child know that feelings are okay. Help them learn ways to calm themselves when upset. Help them cope with disappointment. These are wonderful opportunities for teaching about life.
- ◆ Help the child learn to solve problems— to develop his or her own answers and to have opportunities to make choices.

*Adapted from Gonzalez-Mena, Janet & Eyer, Dianne. (1997). Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers. Mayfield Publishing Co.*

Children are born learning. When you cuddle, talk, read, play, and dance with the child/children, this helps their whole self to grow healthy, happy, and secure. Each child grows and learns at his/her own pace as well as in relation to the cultural practices and expectations of the family. Below are some typical behaviors you can expect at different stages. Not all children will follow this exactly, and that is okay. However, if you notice that a child is behind on many of these, you can contact Healthy Mother, Healthy Babies (800) 322-2588 or talk to the child's health care provider.

- Birth to 3 months:**
- Lifts head
  - Looks at faces
  - Smiles and coos when spoken to
  - Cries
  - Likes to be held and rocked
- 3 to 6 months:**
- Rolls over
  - Follows objects with eyes
  - Makes single sounds
  - Shows feelings
  - Grasps objects
  - Recognizes familiar faces
- 6 to 9 months:**
- Sits up without help
  - Aware of self and aware of differences
  - Looks into a mirror – responds to name
  - Makes strings of sounds
  - Clings – experiences and shows fear
  - Begins chewing
  - Rolls over – can stand for short time with support
- 9 to 12 months:**
- Says simple words
  - Moves very fast – crawling and walking
  - Plays hiding games
  - Uses sounds and gestures
  - Begins to show sense of humor
- 12 to 15 months:**
- Begins walking without help
  - Scribbles
  - Begins using words
  - Plays next to other children
  - Can experience and show shame
  - Begins to mimic adult behavior

- 15 to 18 months:** Dances and sings  
 Puts two words together  
 Uses 10-15 words on his/her own without encouragement  
 Tries to be helpful  
 Is sensitive and may “catch” feelings from adults
- 18 to 24 months:** Can build a tower  
 Likes to climb  
 Uses single words a lot  
 Is able to run  
 Looks at pictures in a book  
 Begins to use two-word phrases
- 2 to 3 years:** Kicks, jumps, and walks up/down stairs  
 Pretends and shows affection  
 Uses three-word phrases  
 Identifies people with words  
 May begin to use social labels  
 Classifies people by gender  
 Says at least 100 words
- 3 to 4 years:** Plays with others  
 Knows names colors and how to draw shapes  
 Uses action words  
 Identifies people according to physical characteristics  
 Absorbs positive/negative feelings and ideas about people, including themselves  
 Pedals a tricycle  
 Opens door using door knob
- 4 to 5 years:** Balances on one foot  
 Sings songs  
 Comforts friends  
 Uses 4 to 5 word sentences  
 Enjoys active play  
 Can name 3 colors and count to ten  
 Seeks labels for race, gender, and abilities
- 5 to 6 years:** Asks questions to seek information  
 Can dress self completely  
 Explores real/make believe and fair/unfair  
 Understands cultural identity  
 Enjoys exploring cultures of friends/classmates

For children, play is a learning process. Through play, children experiment to see what works and what does not work. They learn to solve problems in life as they watch and listen then recreate what they've seen and heard through play. Children can make sense of their world through play, using a lens of their own culture and others. Culture is a way of behaving, understanding and being in the world.

### *Homemade Toys and Activities*

**E**ducational toys for young children do not have to be expensive or come in fancy packages. Many toys can be made from recycled and ordinary household materials. Encouraging children to pretend and create their own play and games will open up a world of possibilities. Let children create with raw materials and combine homemade toys with commercial toys for a variety of activities and experiences.

#### **Play Dough**

2c. Flour

1c. Salt

3T. Cream of Tartar

2T. Cooking oil

2c. Water

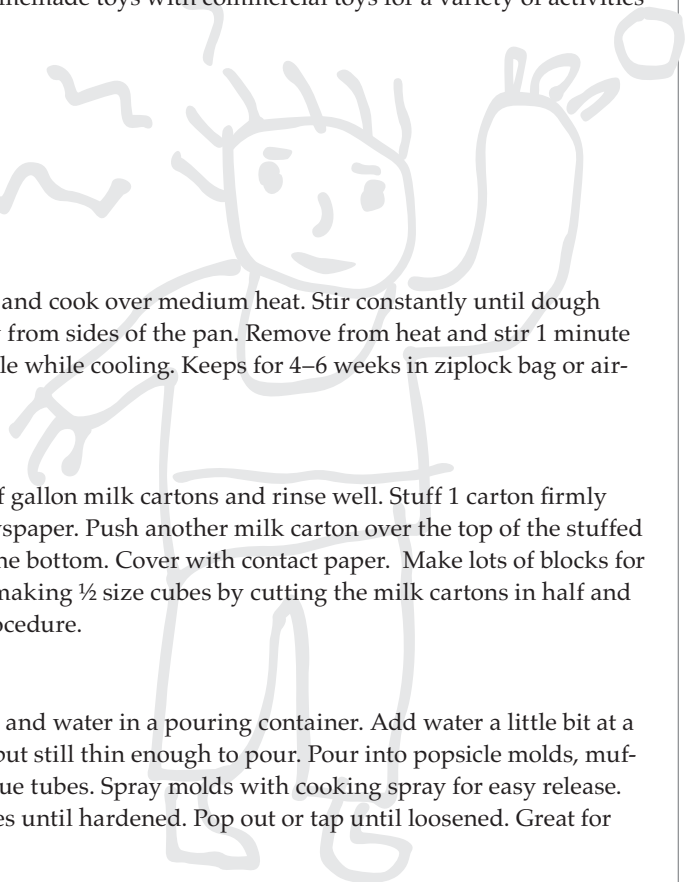
Mix all ingredients and cook over medium heat. Stir constantly until dough begins to pull away from sides of the pan. Remove from heat and stir 1 minute more. Knead on table while cooling. Keeps for 4–6 weeks in ziplock bag or airtight container

#### **Milk Carton Blocks**

Cut the tops off half gallon milk cartons and rinse well. Stuff 1 carton firmly with crumpled newspaper. Push another milk carton over the top of the stuffed one all the way to the bottom. Cover with contact paper. Make lots of blocks for tall buildings. Try making  $\frac{1}{2}$  size cubes by cutting the milk cartons in half and follow the same procedure.

#### **Sidewalk Chalk**

Mix Plaster of Paris and water in a pouring container. Add water a little bit at a time until it is wet but still thin enough to pour. Pour into popsicle molds, muffin tins or toilet tissue tubes. Spray molds with cooking spray for easy release. Let sit for 30 minutes until hardened. Pop out or tap until loosened. Great for outdoor art!



**Put it in/Dump it out Can**

Cut a slot in the lid of a coffee can, oatmeal box, or baby formula can. Decorate juice can lids with paint, stickers, or markers. Let toddlers drop the lids through the slit in the can, dump it out, do it again. Toddlers like the repetition of this activity. It also builds coordination and object permanence.

**Stringing**

Anything with a hole can be used for stringing. Add shoelaces, scraps of rope or string. Try rings from gallon milk jugs, cut sections of toilet paper tubes, paper and ribbon rolls, plastic tubing, etc. Threading and stringing builds hand-eye coordination.

**Shaker bottles**

Fill empty clear plastic bottles halfway with water or mineral oil. Add glitter, food coloring, dish detergent, small toys, rocks, shells, etc. Waves bottles can be made by using half colored blue water and half mineral or baby oil. Seal bottle top with glue to avoid leaks or spills. These are fun to shake and mix and can also be rolled on the floor for young children.

**Plastic bag parachute** *(not appropriate for children under 3yrs.)*

Cut a square from a plastic grocery or produce bag. Cut four strings 12–18 inches long and tie one to each corner of the plastic bag. Gather the strings together and tie onto an action figure. Wrap the parachute around the figure and drop or toss in the air. Fun for the park or outdoor spaces. Can be made from fabric for more durable use.

**Tents and Forts**

Give children blankets, towels or sheets to drape over tables or chairs to create forts, tents and hideouts. String a rope up outdoors or tack a sheet to the fence for outside play spaces. Clothespins and tape are sometimes helpful in getting things to stay in place.

**Boxes, Ramps, Tunnels and Towers**

Many items from the recycle bin can be used for creative play experiences. Let kids decorate cereal boxes, cardboard tubes or large appliance boxes to enhance dramatic play. Use box cutter or razor knife (adults only) to cut out windows, doors or spaceship portholes. Boxes and tubes can be decorated with contact paper, paint, stickers or markers to give details to the stories and play sequences.

*Adapted from Child Care Resources "Great Ideas"*

### **Footstep Path (Large Motor Activity)**

Trace around an adult shoe on old file folders, construction paper, or thin cardboard. Make a lot of footprints and then cut them out. Use the footprints to create an obstacle course so the children follow the footprints over, under, around, and through objects. This can be played inside or outside. You can vary the game with playing music, using stop and go or moving by crawling, skipping, running, hopping or tiptoeing.

### **Follow the Leader**

You have the child or children follow you as you take them through similar actions as the footstep path activity using the concepts of over, under, around, through using music. You can also use the game "Simon says" as part of the movement game.

### **Lacing Cards**

Glue a magazine picture onto cardboard or draw a picture of an object that you want to lace around. Use a hole punch and punch holes in the cardboard around the picture or object. Children can lace in and out of the holes using a long shoe string or yarn (dip the ends in white glue and let dry) You can have very simple to more complex lacing cards depending on the ages of the children.

### **Clothespin Squeeze**

Attach a different  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch color office dot to the rim of a coffee can or plastic containers. Place the same  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch color dots on clothespins using one different color per clothespin. Have the child/children attach the clothespins to the rim of the containers by matching the colors. For younger children, you can use smaller containers and place several of the same color dots on each container and have several clothespins with the same color dots. The child/children can then place the same color clothespins into the matching container.

### **Shape Pictures**

Cut cardboard, paper, or material into simple shapes (circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles). Make several different sizes and colors. Arrange the shapes into pictures and trace the shape picture onto another piece of paper. These will become the patterns for the child/children to match using the cut out shapes. Make the shape pictures vary from being simple to complex depending upon the age of the child or children.

Children typically begin elementary school in September following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. The enrollment process takes place several months before the child starts school.

The first step is to identify the child's school. School district representatives will tell you when and where to register a child for school. Documents needed to register a child for school usually include:

- ◆ Photo identification of the parent/guardian registering the child
- ◆ Two additional address verification documents
- ◆ Child's birth certificate or similar document such as a passport
- ◆ Certificate of Immunization Status completed by the parent/guardian
- ◆ Some school districts may have additional or different requirements.

Once you know which school the child will be attending, ask if there are opportunities to visit the school. Getting to know the school building and some of the staff will help the child feel more confident and comfortable when school begins.

### **Success in School**

Children do better in school when their parents, guardians and other important adults in their lives are involved. Ask about opportunities to be involved in the school, such as volunteering in the classroom or helping on field trips. Many schools welcome help from all adults, not only parents. If you speak another language in addition to English, you could offer to help the school communicate with other parents who speak your language.

Most children will have school work assigned to complete outside of school hours. Some schools assign homework in grades as young as kindergarten. Although it is important for children to have time to play and relax after school, they also need a place to do homework that allows them to focus on their work. Setting time aside each day to focus on homework will help children develop habits that contribute to school success.

### **Helping Children Get Ready to Start School**

There are some important skills children need to make a successful transition to kindergarten. What comes to mind for most of us is the need for children to have early "academic" skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics.

Although some knowledge in these areas will help children be better prepared for kindergarten, what are most important are children's social and emotional skills. These include:

- ◆ Feeling excited and comfortable about starting kindergarten.
- ◆ Knowing what kindergarten will be like.
- ◆ Feeling good about himself or herself.
- ◆ Knowing how to get along with others.
- ◆ Knowing how to talk with others and to listen.
- ◆ Knowing when and how to ask for help.

In addition to social and emotional skills children entering kindergarten need to be active, eager learners. This includes:

- ◆ Feeling excited about learning.
- ◆ Knowing how to try new or hard things.
- ◆ Confidence to keep trying even when it seems too hard.
- ◆ Knowing many ways to express himself or herself.
- ◆ Feeling good about his or her family and culture.
- ◆ Interest in learning about other cultures.

Possessing some early, or pre-academic skills, will help children get off to a good start in kindergarten. The types of skills children should have include:

- ◆ Familiarity with words and books.
- ◆ Knowledge of shapes, sizes and colors.
- ◆ Ability to count and understand that numbers have meaning.

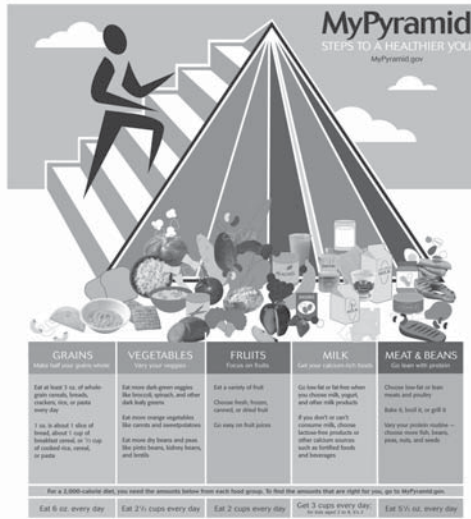
Physical development is another important aspect of kindergarten readiness. Give children ample opportunities to:

- ◆ Take care of his or her own personal needs, such as going to the bathroom, washing hands, putting on a coat, and eating.
- ◆ Use his or her hands and fingers to do small tasks, such as puzzles, drawing, cutting with scissors.
- ◆ Use his or her arms, legs and body to make big movements, such as running, jumping, climbing, dancing.

Finally, a child's basic needs must be met before going to school each day. Make sure he or she is fed, rested and dressed for the weather.

For more information, contact Child Care Resources and Referral at (651) 641-0332.

Eating provides the energy necessary for children’s growing bodies, so it is especially important that there is a healthy balance in what children eat from the six food groups. Adults need to help children make good choices about food to keep them healthy.



(4–6 year olds can eat these serving sizes. Offer 2–3 year olds less, except for milk. 2–6 year olds need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.)

Children learn from adults, so remember to model what you want them to learn. The types of food and when and how you eat may be shaped by your culture, religion, and other factors. You can use the foods that are familiar to you when creating snacks and meals for children, and they will be healthy if they are balanced and contain good vitamins and nutrients.

Here are some ideas for easy snacks that older children can make;

- ◆ Fruit rollups – place cooked fruit or fresh fruit bite size pieces and roll in a tortilla
- ◆ Breakfast Burritos – place scrambled eggs and cheese in the tortilla
- ◆ Fruit Kabobs – thread sliced fruit (apple, orange, strawberry, banana, pineapple) onto straws
- ◆ Ants on a log – celery sticks filled with cream cheese and topped with raisins
- ◆ Rice cake faces – spread peanut butter or cream cheese and decorate a face using raisins, banana slices, berries etc.
- ◆ Trail mix made with dried fruit: raisins, currents, cranberries, sunflower seeds, pine nuts, etc.

## Tasting Games

Using a variety of different fresh fruits, raw vegetables, cheeses, have children look, feel, smell and taste the foods, then describe and compare them. Help them with the words, such as firm, squishy, bitter, salty, sour, and sweet. You can make a chart of the child's/children's responses. This encourages awareness, language skills, and the ability to contrast and compare.

## Beans

**Activities to do at the grocery store:** How many different kinds of beans can be found? Include dried, frozen, canned, and fresh. What are some words to use to describe the different kinds of beans (color, shape, size)?

**Activities to do at home:** Sprout dried beans by placing them between wet paper towels. Plant in a pot when sprouted and watch them grow. Create a story about the bean plant and the child can draw a picture to go with the story. You can make a type of bean soup.

## Apples

**Activities to do at the grocery store:** Apples come in all shades and colors. How many colors of apples can be found? How many kinds of apples can be found? What words can be used to describe an apple? How many apples are in a pound? Use the scale.

**Activities to do at home:** How many bites does it take to eat your apple? How many seeds are in your apple? Make applesauce or apple butter.

## Green Fruits and Vegetables:

**Activities to do at the grocery store:** How many green vegetables can you find? How many green fruits can you find? What are some words you can use to describe green fruits and vegetables?

**Activities to do at home:** Grow an indoor miniature herb garden. Tell or write a story about a fruit or vegetable. Make a salad with all green vegetables or all green fruit.



Minnesota State has child care licensing regulations that apply to people in their own homes who provide regular care for children under age 11 to whom they are not related. Many family, friend and neighbor caregivers are exempt from these regulations. To determine if a caregiver is exempt from these regulations, answer the following questions:

- ◆ Is the caregiver related by blood, marriage, adoption or tribal custom to the child(ren) in care?
- ◆ Is the care provided in the child's home?
- ◆ Is the provider caring for less than 1 unrelated family?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," then the caregiver is exempt from licensing regulations. For more information on licensing regulations, contact (651) 266-KIDS.

Minnesota has a child care assistance program that helps low-income families pay for child care. This assistance may be used to pay for care in a licensed child care facility, licensed exempt home, care provided in the child's own home, or care provided in a relative's home. For more information about the child care assistance program and/or to determine eligibility, call (651) 641-6665 in Ramsey County. To identify other supports for low income families with children, visit the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota, Cover All Kids Coalition, Web site at [www.cdf-mn.org](http://www.cdf-mn.org).



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