

HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT BABYSITTING HANDBOOK

TIPS FOR PARENTS-

Prepare Your Home-

- Look for potential hazards in the home such as open stairways, uncovered electrical outlets or sharp objects that are within reach.
- Keep gates across stairways to prevent falls from occurring.
- Keep children from playing near glass doors and windows.
- Install smoke alarms and safety latches on outside doors.
- Make sure all hazards i.e. drugs, medications, pesticides, paints, cleaning products, plants etc are safely stored. A young babysitter will not be alert to the dangers many things pose for young children. Many of these items can be quite dangerous.
- Consider placing a latch on the bathroom door out of reach of young children.
- Install safety latches or safety knobs on all cabinets.
- If there is an emergency, call 911.

What To Look For In A Babysitter: Questions To Ask Yourself-

- Is our babysitter mature enough to deal with more than one child in a crisis situation?
- Does our babysitter have experience in dealing with distressed children?
- How long will it take us to return home should there be a crisis that my babysitter is too young to deal with?
- Is the Babysitter trained in CPR and First Aid?

What Your Babysitter Needs To Know-

- Family an escape plan should there be a fire
- List of contact names and numbers
- CPR and first aid
- General medical history of the children (allergies, medications, recent injuries, illnesses etc.)
- Where important items (flashlights, first aid box, telephones, light switches etc.) are stored or located

IN-HOME DROWNING PREVENTION TIPS FOR PARENTS AND BABYSITTERS-

- Learn CPR and first aid- the Red Cross and most YMCAs offer classes in your area.
- Never leave a baby alone in a bathtub for even a second.
- Always keep the baby in arm's reach.
- Don't leave a baby in the care of another young child.
- Never leave to answer the phone, answer the door, to get a towel or for any other reason. If you must leave, take the baby with you.
- A baby bath seat is not a substitute for supervision. A bath seat is a bathing aid, not a safety device. Babies have slipped or climbed out of bath seats and drowned.
- Never use a baby bath seat in a non-skid, slip-resistant bathtub because the suction cups will not adhere to the bathtub surface or can detach unexpectedly. Babies could tip over and drown.
- Never leave a container containing even a small amount of liquid unattended. When finished using a bucket, always empty it immediately.
- Don't leave containers outside where rainwater can collect in them. Toddlers can drown in as little as 2 inches of liquid. Babies and younger children can drown in AS LITTLE AS THREE TEASPOONS of liquid!
- Always secure safety covers and barriers to prevent children from gaining access to spas or hot tubs when not in use. Some non-rigid covers, such as solar covers, can allow a small child to slip in the water and the cover would appear to still be in place.
- Be extremely cautious of swimming pools, paddling pools, and spas even when a pool has a cover and is fenced in. Keep your eyes on the children at all times. If a child is missing, immediately check the pool to make sure the child has not fallen in it.
- Make sure that gates are locked, and paddling pools are emptied after use.
- Keep the toilet lid down to prevent access to the water and consider using a toilet clip to stop young children from opening the lids.

TIPS FOR THE BABYSITTER WHILE ON THE JOB-

General Safety Tips- “Think Safety First”

Good babysitters are safety-conscious and take extra precautions to make sure the children are safe from accidents. Make sure you always know where the children are. If you need to talk on the phone, make calls short and always be attentive to the children.

- Keep windows and outside doors locked and do not open them to see who is there.
- Be careful not to offer information over the phone. Do not tell anyone that you are alone.
- Never leave a baby unattended on a changing table, in a high chair, bath or walker. Use safety straps whenever they are available. Stay awake so you'll hear the children if they need you.
- If you get sick while babysitting, call your parents or another qualified babysitter to take over for you. Then contact the parents to let them know of the change in plans for their final approval.
- Don't let speed or carelessness cause you to have an accident.
- Always carry the baby or any parcel so that you can see where you are stepping.
- If you should suffer a cut or burn put the baby in his crib and take other children with you while you apply first aid.
- If you are annoyed, bothered or in doubt about any unusual people or situations, call one of the emergency contacts, or your own parents.

Nap Time-

- Keep the radio or TV turned low so that you can hear a cry or call from the child when he/she is sleeping.
- Never leave a young child alone while he/she is awake. Check on the child occasionally while they are sleeping.
- Remove plastic bags, beanbags or pillows from cots. These could cover a child's face and cut off breathing.
- Keep buttons, pins, cigarettes, money, small toy pieces, matches, and any other small particles off the floor and out of sight.
- Make sure that doors to rooms such as the bathroom, basement and garage are closed.
- Remove any strings or straps that might pose a strangulation hazard to a young child.

Bath Time-

- Don't bathe the children unless specifically asked to do so.
- If you do bathe the children, do it very carefully and never leave the child unattended.
- The water in the bathtub should be comfortable to touch, not too hot! Always run the cold water first. Test temp 3 times.

Feeding Time-

- Put things away and out of reach of children when preparing food. Always know where the emergency exits are located.
- Cut food into bite size pieces for toddlers and preschoolers. Make sure that children remain seated while eating.
- Avoid foods that are likely to cause a young child to choke such as popcorn, hot dogs, hard candy, and grapes.

Play Time-

- Children will likely try you out to see how far you will let them go. Be firm in insisting that they play where they will be safe.
- Wardrobes, medicine chests, drawers, and storage locations are not proper places for children to play. Also keep them away from stairways, hot objects (such as an iron, stoves, microwaves and electrical outlets). Keep scissors or knives out of sight.
- Look for toys with long strings and cords that may strangle an infant or young child. Put these toys in a place where young children cannot reach them.
- Put away electronic toys that might burn or shock young children.
- Make sure that the toys the children are playing with are appropriate for their ages. Toys that are safe for older children can be quite dangerous when played with by younger children.
- Explain your outdoor rules to children. Your list might include: no pushing other children off a swing or piece of playground equipment, no swinging empty swings, no climbing up the front of the slide, no walking in front or back of a moving swing, no twisting swing chains, no rough playing on the equipment, and only one person can be on a piece of equipment at one time, if it is designed for use by one person. If playing outside, know where their parents allow them to play.
- Watch for traffic and fire hazards, garden sprays, tools and unfriendly animals.

