



Childcare Worker Safety

HS06-003A(6-06)

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

Workers in childcare facilities provide care and education for infants, toddlers and preschool age children. Childcare workers should pay attention to their own safety in the

workplace while nurturing children.

Ergonomics

Using good ergonomics can reduce the risk of strain or sprain injuries to childcare workers. Childcare workers should practice safety, by bending knees and keeping the back straight to protect the back while performing tasks.

- Allow children to use a step stool to reach the sink, or water fountain.
- When comforting a child, kneel down to their level instead of bending over toward them or lifting them.
- Avoid bending or hunching over when cleaning, setting low tables or setting up cots; bending knees and keeping back straight protects the back during these tasks.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

Working around small furniture, numerous toys, and small children increases the risk of slips, trips and falls. To prevent injury childcare workers should:

- wear sturdy, comfortable shoes with good traction;
- walk slowly and avoid rushing while carrying loads or children, which obstruct the view;
- clean up scattered toys on the floor between activities; and
- ensure that spills are cleaned up immediately; and
- ensure all rugs are secured.

Infection Control

The spread of germs is a safety risk in childcare facilities. Childcare workers should practice infection control to reduce the spread of germs.

- Wear latex gloves when changing diapers, helping children use the toilet, wiping noses, brushing teeth, giving health exams, and administering first aid.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap in between caring for each child, changing diapers, helping children in the bathroom, before preparing food, before eating, and before leaving for the day.
- Frequently wash down tables, counters, and sinks with a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts of water.
- Wear smocks or aprons to reduce germ transmittal, especially with infant care.
- Consider vaccination against chicken pox, hepatitis B, measles, rubella, mumps, polio, tetanus, and diphtheria; diseases which can cause serious illness.

- Contact the local health department for required adult immunizations for childcare workers.

Latex Gloves

Latex gloves are commonly used for universal precautions and when cooking or serving food. Ensure that the latex gloves used are powdered to reduce skin contact and that there are non-latex alternatives available. Some people react to latex products. The reaction may be mild or severe. Some people may experience watery eyes or skin irritation on the hands. Others may experience severe allergy like breathing difficulty or collapse.

At first, the reaction may be mistaken for a skin reaction from frequent handwashing or a mild “cold” (watery eyes, runny nose, sneeze, or cough). When a latex reaction is suspected the person needs a medical evaluation. Employers should urge workers to seek medical evaluation and to receive medical guidance about work tasks.

People with latex reaction should wear a medical identification bracelet or other device stating the latex sensitivity. Workers sensitive to latex should obtain guidelines from their health care provider about appropriate products to use when doing childcare tasks. Guidelines for workers should be shared with the childcare employer and job tasks reviewed. Gloves made of vinyl or some other substance that does not contain or cross-react with latex should be available at diaper changing areas, in the first aid kits, emergency supplies, food service, and in play areas or spaces. Other common supplies that contain latex, such as rubber bands, should also be removed from the workplace. Workers with latex reaction should read the label of all products suspected of containing latex.

Persons with known or suspected latex reaction do not use latex gloves. The workplace should provide powder-free gloves with reduced protein content for their co-workers. The latex proteins, that cause allergies, attach to the powder used in gloves. This powder can become airborne when the gloves are removed and be inhaled by those with latex allergies. For this reason, non-latex synthetic gloves should be available for every worker’s use.

Parents of infants or other young children may not know their child will react to latex. When children are suspected of having a latex reaction, childcare providers should work with parents to secure medical evaluation and guidance for the childcare setting.

Disposal of Waste

Children should be taught how to dispose of their own waste to reduce hazards both for the children and childcare staff, rather than leaving them for someone else to pick up.

- They should throw away their own used facial tis-

sues and band-aids into the trash.

- They should take care of their own eating utensils after meals and snacks.
- They should also pick up their own dirty towels, placing in a hamper or container.

Lice

Lice infestation is highly contagious and common in childcare. The tiny insects can be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact or by sharing combs, brushes, towels, hats, helmets, and bedding; sharing personal items should be avoided. Lice are not dangerous and don't carry disease; they infest the skin, especially the scalp, and can cause extreme itchiness and rashes. Treatment requires special shampoos and fine combing the hair to remove lice and their nits (eggs). Contaminated items should be washed with warm soapy water before reusing to prevent further spread of lice.

Outdoor Safety

When supervising children in outdoor play areas, childcare workers should practice sun safety.

- Wear a hat and sunscreen to protect against harmful UV rays.
- Supervise the children from under a covered or shaded play area.
- Wear several light layers of clothing and watch for symptoms of environmental stress or heat stress.

Childcare is a vital service to care for the future generation; childcare workers are teachers, as well as role models to children. While focusing on health and safety on the job, childcare workers should model safe behavior and ensure that the childcare setting is safe for both children and adults.

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation has the following publications to assist employers and childcare workers in preventing injuries and illness in the workplace at <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/information/videoresources/onlinepubs.html#Categories> under "Free Safety and Health Publications: Online Safety and Health Library":

- Latex Allergy Fact Sheet
 - Preventing Slips and Trips Take 5 For Safety
 - Chickenpox Fact Sheet
 - Sun Safety Take 5 For Safety
 - Heat Stress Safety Education & Training Program
- Remember to practice safety, don't learn it by accident.

This fact sheet was published in cooperation with the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation and is considered factual at time of development.