

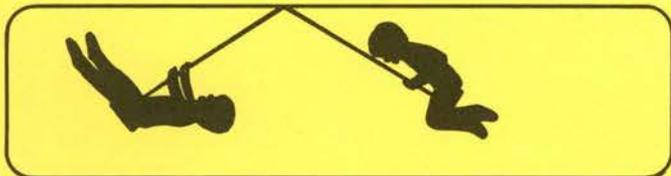
young families

No. 60
March—April 1984

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
DOCUMENTS

MAR 5 1984

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Quality Day Care

The number of children whose mothers (as well as fathers) work away from home has risen steadily throughout the past decade, with the greatest increase occurring among children under six years of age. By March, 1983, nearly half of all preschoolers had mothers in the labor force. Many of these children attend day care centers.

Researchers have found no major differences between children receiving day care and children raised at home, provided that the day care is of good quality. But how do you know what constitutes good quality day care? Here are some important things to consider when choosing day care for your child.

Look for a high ratio of caregivers to children — about one adult to every three infants, and at least one adult for every six toddlers (over age two).

Good caregivers truly like children. They understand children's basic needs at different ages, and they can control children with a light touch and a positive approach rather than with harsh punishment or stern disapproval.

Parents differ on how they want their children treated. So it's important to find a caregiver who shares your attitudes about nurturance and discipline, and who has similar values regarding TV viewing, playthings, reading, and other activities.

During the first two or three years of life, children need activities that encourage intellectual, emotional, and social development. A good day care center will provide the following experiences:

- **Variety.** The child will be exposed to a great deal of variety in day-to-day experiences, play materials, and environment.
- **Regularity.** Young children need some regularity of experience. They need to know in a general way what to expect so that they do not become anxious and uncomfortable. This does not mean that a rigid schedule is necessary — merely some predictability.
- **Hands-on experiences.** Infants and children need to be in a place where they can crawl, run, touch things, bang mobiles, shake rattles, and build and knock down block towers. These are the skills they should master during the first years of life.
- **Autonomy and independence.** These are skills children need to develop as they grow older.
- **Protection.** Children need to be protected from excessive demands from adults and from dominance by others of their age.
- **Strengthening of self-image.** Children need an environment where they will not be belittled or humiliated, where there are no threats to their feelings of self-worth.

Finding Quality Day Care

To find quality day care, call your county social service department for names of persons licensed in your neighborhood. Some counties have a separate phone number for day care under the county welfare listing in the telephone directory.

Visit the day care center with your child. If your child seems uncomfortable, cries, or otherwise reacts in a negative way more so than is usual when going to any strange place with you, then visit other centers. Look for one where your child is comfortable. Think how you would feel about being cared for there. Trust your gut reactions. If you don't feel good about a place, don't put your child there. Observe how the personnel relate to parents and children. Do the children seem to enjoy being there? Does the caregiver enjoy being with the children?

Ask the caregiver for a list of references and call each one. Ask what they liked and what they did not like about the day care center or person. Ask if they would use the center or person again. When you call, listen to not only what the person says, but how it is said. Sometimes people are very reluctant to say anything negative, so you may need to judge by the way they answer your questions. Does the person sound cautious or troubled? Does the person pause for a long time before answering?

Regardless of how desperate you may be at the moment, don't immediately hire the first or even the second caregiver you interview. Take your time. Make a sound judgment. You won't regret it.

Ron Pitzer
Extension Family Life Specialist

Car Safety

Here are some important facts to keep in mind whenever you travel with children in a car:

- Children under age five, or weighing less than 40 pounds, should ride in a child restraint.
- The safest place for a child is in the back seat.
- If no child restraint is available, children should use the car safety belt. This is much safer than riding unrestrained.
- Adults should not hold children on their laps while riding in either the front or back seat. They may cause more injuries by crushing the child with their own bodies, or the child may be torn from their arms and thrown against the hard interior of the car. In the back seat, the child may be torn from their arms and thrown into the front area of the car, possibly against the hard interior or into another passenger.
- Children should not ride in the luggage compartment of a station wagon or hatchback.
- Hatchbacks should always be kept closed when children are riding in the back seat. If they are left open, the children could be thrown from the car in an accident. Open hatchbacks or tailgate windows also increase the levels of carbon monoxide inside the car from exhaust fumes.

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Dietary Guidelines #2 & #3

In the last issue of *Young Families*, we discussed the seven Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and took a closer look at guideline #1: Eat a variety of foods. Now let's look at the next two guidelines.

Dietary Guideline #2: Maintain Ideal Weight

People who are overweight have a greater chance of developing high blood pressure, diabetes, and high levels of blood fats and cholesterol. These, in turn, increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

It's also unhealthy to reduce your weight below the acceptable range for your height. Severe weight loss may lead to nutrient deficiencies, menstrual irregularities, infertility, hair loss, skin changes, and other complications.

It is not well understood why some people can eat much more than others and still maintain normal weight. But one thing is certain: to lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you burn. This means eating foods containing fewer calories or increasing your activity — or both.

To lose weight, eat less fat and fatty foods, less sugar and sweets, and avoid too much alcohol. A steady loss of one or two pounds a week is relatively safe and more likely to be maintained. Avoid crash diets that are severely restricted in the variety of foods they allow. Diets containing fewer than 800 calories may be hazardous.

By gradually increasing some of your everyday activities, such as walking or climbing stairs, you can burn off extra calories. Vigorous exercise will use even more calories.

Dietary Guideline #3: Avoid Too Much Fat, Saturated Fat, and Cholesterol

High blood cholesterol levels indicate a greater risk of heart attack. Diets high in saturated fats and cholesterol tend to increase blood cholesterol levels for most people. There is controversy about what recommendations are appropriate for healthy Americans. But for the population as a whole, it's a good idea to reduce the current intake of total fat.

This does not mean you have to completely cut out specific foods. Some foods, such as eggs and liver, are high in cholesterol but contain essential vitamins, minerals, and protein. These foods can be eaten in moderation, as long as your overall cholesterol intake is not excessive.

To avoid too much fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol:

- Choose lean meat, fish, poultry, and dry beans and peas as your protein sources.
- Moderate your use of eggs and organ meats (such as liver).
- Limit your intake of butter, cream, hydrogenated margarines, shortenings and coconut oil.
- Trim excess fat off meats.
- Broil, bake, or boil rather than fry.
- Read labels carefully to determine amount and types of fat contained in foods.

Joanne Slavin
Extension Nutritionist

Home Poisonings

In Minnesota about 100,000 children and adults require either poison information or emergency treatment each year. Between 70 and 80 percent of the poisonings involve children under the age of five.

You can prevent poisonings by using the following safety precautions:

- Store all drugs and chemicals in their original containers and out of the reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Never put chemicals in food containers.
- Never take drugs in front of children. They may imitate you.
- Never call medicine candy.
- Use products with safety caps.
- Read and follow label directions on all products before using them.
- Keep the phone number of the State Poison Center attached to your phone. Don't hesitate to call if you have a problem or a question.

If a poisoning occurs, remain calm. Call the State Poison Center or your physician. Have the following information ready:

- Age and sex of patient
- Your name and phone number
- Name of product
- Amount involved
- Time poisoning occurred
- Any symptoms

The Poison Center or your physician will give you instructions on what to do next.

Keep a one-ounce bottle of syrup of ipecac in your medicine cabinet. It is available at pharmacies. If vomiting is necessary, the Poison Center will instruct you to give the patient syrup of ipecac. *Do not give it unless specifically instructed to do so.* If hospital treatment is needed, the Poison Center will direct you to the closest hospital that can handle your problem.

The Minnesota State Poison Control Center, located at St. Paul-Ramsey Hospital, can be contacted by calling toll-free from anywhere in our state, 1-800-222-1222. Call the center if you have a poisoning, or for printed material on poison prevention.

Robert Aherin
Extension Safety Specialist

This Issue

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