



DIAPERING IS NOT JUST ROUTINE

Changing a baby's diaper is an opportunity for the child to learn and bond with you, and a time to take important precautions for the protection of the child's and your own health. Diapering can be a special time for the caregiver and baby to have full attention in a one-on-one situation. It is an important learning activity for the child, who is engaged in and participating at his own level of level of ability. Caregivers who talk with and encourage the child's participation support feelings of competence and facilitate language development.

The diapering area

A well-planned diapering area is basic to healthy, safe and easy diapering. These are some important rules to remember:

- Use the area only for diapering.
- Set up the diapering area as far as possible from any food handling area.
- Provide running water for hand washing immediately after diaper changes.
- Construct a flat and safe diapering surface high enough to prevent stress on your back.
- Be sure the surface is clean, waterproof and free of cracks or crevices.
- Cover the surface with a disposable cover, such as paper bags, used computer paper or rolls of paper.
- Keep all creams, lotions and cleaning items out of children's reach, but within yours.
- Add a guardrail at least three inches high for extra safety.



- Always keep a hand on the child.
- Never leave the child unattended, even for a second.
- Provide safe steps to allow older children to climb up on the table.



Sanitation

- Most experts do not recommend the use of latex gloves for diapering (unless blood is present). If you do use gloves, be sure to follow recommendations for using gloves effectively.
- Be sure to wash the child's hands and your own with soap under running water (infants, too). Clean and disinfect the diapering area and all equipment and supplies that were touched.
- The steps to hygienic diapering can be obtained by calling the Healthline.

Social and learning opportunities

Remember these principles and make diapering a bonding time for you and the child.

- Focus your attention on the child.
- Treat the child with respect.
- Talk with the child about what you are doing and what the child is experiencing.

by Cheryl Oku, Infant/Toddler Specialist- This article was reprinted with permission from Child Care Health Connections, January/February Issue, 2001