



PARENT PLUS

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Look for right qualities in your child's baby sitter

Finding a baby sitter for children of all ages can be a daunting task. You want to make sure your child is safe, but you also want him or her to feel comfortable and have fun.

A responsible adolescent from the neighborhood may be a good option. Teenagers usually are energetic and playful, making them good candidates for interacting with younger kids. However, they often are less strict than parents prefer.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends maintaining a list of three to four baby sitters who can be called on when needed. Before hiring a sitter, parents should:

- meet the sitter and check references and training;
- talk with the teen's parents to see how he/she handles responsibility;
- talk with other parents who have used the teenager for baby-sitting; and
- be sure the baby sitter is at least

13 years old and mature enough to handle common emergencies. The sitter should have first aid training and know CPR.

Parents should take several precautions before leaving the house to the baby sitter:

- Provide a number where you can be reached, as well as the phone numbers for the poison control center, pediatrician, police/fire department and a reliable neighbor.
- Familiarize the baby sitter with your children and their routines, as well as any allergies or specific needs.
- Show the sitter fire escape routes, and instruct him or her to leave the house right away in



case of fire and to call the fire department from a neighbor's house.

- Discuss rules, feeding, bathing and sleeping arrangements for the children.
- Have emergency supplies such as flashlights and first aid kits on hand.

The AAP offers a baby sitter training program on CD-ROM (\$33.95), with a separate student manual (\$5.95); both resources can be used by parents seeking to hire a sitter. The manual includes a sitter's checklist. Visit www.aap.org, click on Bookstore and search BLAST!

— David Ma

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