

Choose
your partner
carefully.



Contact the National Parent Helpline at
1-855-4 PARENT (1-855-427-2736) for more
information, help and support or visit
www.nationalparenthelpline.org/.

Contact the National Parent Helpline at
1-855-4 PARENT (1-855-427-2736) for
more information, help and support or
visit www.nationalparenthelpline.org/.



PITTSBURGH
MERCY
A HERITAGE OF HOPE
A CHILD'S PLACE AT MERCY



University of Pittsburgh
Graduate School of Public Health



Choose your
partner carefully –
your baby is counting on you.



Very few people believe that someone they love or trust could ever hurt their child.

But it happens.

Choosing an appropriate caregiver, including a caregiving partner, is one of the most important decisions a parent can make. Just because someone is a lover, or close friend does not mean they are capable of taking care of a child. How well do you know the person who will be caring for your child? Do they make good decisions? Are they responsible and trustworthy? If you wouldn't leave your valuables with this person, don't leave your baby with him or her.

Questions to ask yourself:

- **How does he/she treat** other adults? How does he/she treat children (nieces, nephews, friends' children, etc.)?
- **Does he/she get** angry when you spend time with your child?
- **Does he/she get** angry or impatient when your child cries or has a tantrum?
- **Does he/she call** your child bad names or put him down?
- **Does he/she think** it's funny to scare your child?
- **Does he/she make** all the decisions for you and your child?

- **Does he/she put** you down or tell you that you're a bad parent or that you shouldn't have your kids?
- **Does he/she pretend** when he/she hurts your child, that you are to blame or that it's no big deal?
- **Does he/she tell** you that your child is a nuisance?
- **Does he/she scare** your child by using guns, knives, or other weapons?



If you answered "yes" to even one of these questions, your child could be at risk. Never leave your child with someone you don't trust to keep your child safe.

When choosing a caregiver, you should select someone who:

- **Will never** shake, hit, yell at, make fun of or withhold food from a baby or child;
- **Has experience** safely caring for babies and children;
- **Is patient** and mature enough to be gentle with a crying or excited baby;
- **Understands that** young children must always be watched when they are awake;
- **Does not abuse** drugs or alcohol or carry a weapon and does not allow a child to be around those who are drinking, using drugs or carrying a weapon.

Before leaving your child in your partner's care, ask about their experience and how they would respond to an upset or unwell child. Post an emergency contact list of persons who have agreed to be on-call in a visible place, on your refrigerator, for example.

Make sure your caregiving partner knows what to do when your baby won't stop crying:

- **Never shake the baby.** It takes only a few seconds of shaking to cause bleeding in the brain which can lead to long-term injury or death.
- **Do what is needed** if baby is hungry, needs to burp or be changed from a soiled diaper, is too hot or too cold.
- **Encourage baby** to sleep by walking calmly while gently holding the baby and singing or quietly talking.
- **Offer,** but don't force, a pacifier.
- **If nothing else works,** place the crying baby in an empty crib, lying on his or her back. Check on baby every five minutes or so. This gives you a chance to take some deep breaths and calm down while the baby is safe.
- **Call me or** one of the emergency contacts for help.

The warning signs of a potentially dangerous caregiver include:

- **Being angry** or very impatient when children have tantrums, cry or misbehave.
- **Being violent** and/or controlling with his or her partner.
- **Being physically or verbally abusive** toward children.
- **Abusing alcohol and drugs,** including marijuana.
- **Using prescription medications** that have bad side effects or cause drowsiness
- **Being untrustworthy** for any reason.