Signs of a Good Caregiver

* **Your baby warms up to him or her.** It may take a while before your child grows to trust and love his or her caregiver, however you should notice your baby warming up after several sessions together. If this isn’t happening, it may be that the caregiver is not providing the kind of warmth and comfort your child needs. Even the best caregivers cannot replace you or your partner, but you want to be sure that the caregiver cares for your child just as much as you do.
* **The caregiver is genuinely happy to see your baby.** If your caregiver truly enjoys spending time with your baby, you will know it and your child will sense it, too. His or her love will show every time they are together.
* **The caregiver comes up with creative solutions to problems and works with you to provide the best possible care for your child.** You want a caregiver who will turn to you for advice. Taking the initiative and collaborating with you shows that he or she takes the job seriously.
* **The caregiver respects your time.** A conscientious caregiver will arrive on time and call to let you know if he or she is running late. The caregiver will also give you ample warning when he or she is unable to care for your child and may even help you find a substitute caregiver.
* **The caregiver makes an effort to stay connected.** A caregiver who takes his or her job seriously will keep you informed by leaving notes or even filling out a daily report. If you set aside some time for the two of you to catch up, the caregiver will understand that you want to know how your child is doing and notify you of any problems, big or small.
* **Your baby is clean, and messes aren’t left for you.** Cleanliness is a sign of conscientiousness. You want your caregiver to be focused on your child and not preoccupied cleaning your home, however he or she should tidy up any messes they make. The caregiver should also wipe off your child’s face and hands whenever they get dirty.
* **Accidents are infrequent.** Of course tumbles will happen, but a good caregiver makes safety a priority both at home and when out of the house. The caregiver should look both ways before pushing the stroller across the street, keep a close eye on your child at the playground, and make sure safety gates stay closed. If the caregiver drives your child, you will want to ride with him or her before you send your child out alone. You will also want to make sure that his or her car is reliable, a car seat for your child is properly installed, and that he or she always buckles your baby up safely.

**Signs of a Bad Caregiver**

* **Your baby isn’t happy to see the caregiver and has become anxious and withdrawn.** A caregiver can never replace Mom or Dad, but a baby needs to trust and love the caregiver. Perhaps your child and caregiver haven’t bonded, or the caregiver just isn’t providing the kind of warmth and comfort your child needs. (If you suspect something more serious is wrong, educate yourself about the signs of child abuse.)
* **The caregiver seems secretive about how they spent the day.** How your baby and his or her caregiver spend their time should not be a secret. When you come home, you’re probably eager to hear about your child and what happened while you were apart. If your caregiver is not forthcoming about the day, either he or she is not a good at communicator or he or she has something to hide. Even a caregiver whose English is limited should be able to convey the ups and downs of your baby’s day and should understand why you want to know.
* **Your baby has been involved in multiple accidents that could have easily been avoided.** A caregiver must keep his or her eye on your child and know what he or she is doing at all times to prevent injury. The caregiver may be leaving your child unattended as he or she sleeps or plays.
* **You notice your requests aren’t followed.** Both of you are working together to care for your child, so a caregiver shouldn’t act as if they know more about your child and childrearing than you do.
* **The caregiver often shows up late.** Find someone who you know is committed to the job and considerate of your needs. Tardiness and unexplained absences may mean she’s unreliable in other ways as well.
* **Your baby often looks unkempt and dirty.** If your child’s caregiver cannot take care of the basics, it may be a sign that he or she is not able to meet your child’s needs.
* **Stories don’t add up.** Never tolerate someone who steals, lies, or deceives you in any way. You have to be able to trust your caregiver for the relationship to work.

**Identifying Child Abuse – How do I know if my child has been abused?**

**A child who has been physically abused may:**

* Cry and put up a fight when it becomes time to go to the caregiver or appear frightened around the caregiver or other adults
* Come home with unexplained bruises, abrasions, burns, broken bones, black eyes, cuts, bite marks, or other injuries
* Repeated injuries of any type can be a warning sign

**A child who has been shaken may show signs of Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) including:**

* Glassy-eyed, appear rigid, lethargic, irritable, have a decreased appetite, have difficulty feeding, vomiting, unable to focus eyes on an object, unable to lift head
* In severe cases of SBS, your child may have difficulty breathing, or seizures, heart failure, coma, and unconsciousness.
* If you suspect your baby is suffering from SBS, call 911 right away.
* Every moment counts in terms of the damage a baby with SBS will suffer.

**A baby who has been emotionally abused may:**

* Display behavioral problems or changes such as shunning a parent’s affections
* Or, alternately, become excessively clingy
* Have a loss of appetite
* Have nightmares or trouble sleeping

**A baby who has been sexually abused may:**

* Have bleeding or bruises in or around the genital area
* Have difficulty sitting, possibly because of genital or anal pain
* Suffer from urinary tract infections

If you have any concerns about the possibility of your child being abused in any way, do not delay action. The sooner you address the problem, the better for your child. If you suspect that your child may have been abused call the statewide hotline **1-800-962-2873**.