

Tip Sheets

Essential Elements of Infant & Toddler Environments: #1 Health and Safety

Essential Elements to Promote in Infant & Toddler Environments

1. **Health and Safety**
2. Comfort and Convenience
3. Child-initiated Exploration and Respect
4. Opportunities for Safe and Natural Movement
5. Choice
6. Flexibility and Responsiveness

Health and Safety

A safe environment allows children to make their own choices which enables caregivers to spend more time observing and playing with children instead of having to say “no.”

Daily checks and corrections of safety hazards should be conducted such as:

- Ensuring that outlets are covered.
- Eliminating choking and tripping hazards.
- Removing broken equipment and toxic materials.

Get down on the floor and look at the environment from a child’s perspective to look for safety hazards that may not be obvious from an adult perspective such as chipping paint or rough edges at the base of furniture

A healthy environment reduces the spread of illness and allows children to take advantage of learning opportunities.

Health and safety policies and procedures should be followed and periodically reviewed to ensure they are current and appropriate. Consider the following environmental elements.

Temperature

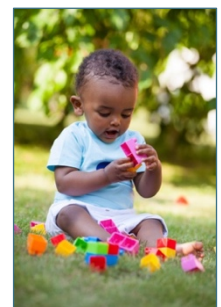
- The indoor temperature should be comfortable, especially near the floor where children spend much of their day.
- Outdoor areas should have plenty of shade to protect children from the sun and heat.

Lighting

- Good lighting is important for a sense of well-being and helps children and adults focus on the task at hand.
- Ensure children have sufficient daily access to natural light.
- Since young infants spend much of their time on their backs, lie down on the floor and look up to make sure that lighting is not too bright or shining in their eyes.

Air Quality

- Indoor and outdoor air quality affects how children and adults feel.
- Indoor areas should have adequate ventilation.
- Dust and debris should be kept to a minimum.
- The environment should smell fresh.
- Infants and toddlers should have daily opportunities to go outdoors.



Cleanliness

Essential practices to prevent the spread of disease include:

- Appropriate handwashing by children and adults.
- Regular cleaning and sanitizing of “tasted” toys and surfaces that are mouthed by children.
- Toileting and diapering areas must be separate from food preparation areas.
- Feeding/eating equipment and surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized following each use.

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