Picking Up and Holding Infants and Toddlers

Most infants and toddlers love to be carried, so it’s important to learn how to safely pick them up and hold them correctly when you’re babysitting.

To pick up an infant who is lying down, slide both of your hands under the infant’s armpits so your thumbs are on her shoulders and your fingers wrap around her ribs and around her back. Then, gently lift the infant.

Always support the head, neck and back of an infant younger than 6 months old because she may throw her head backward at times.

Another way to pick up an infant is to slide one hand under her head and back. Then, slide your other hand under the infant’s bottom. Gently lift her while supporting her head, neck and back.

Two very effective ways to hold an infant are the shoulder hold and cradle hold.

The shoulder hold works well when walking, burping or calming a baby. With one arm under the infant’s bottom and the other arm supporting her head and back, hold the infant in an upright position so she can look over your shoulder.

You can also hold the infant in a cradle hold: Supporting the infant’s bottom and lower back with one hand, cradle the infant in your arm and support her upper back and head with your other arm.

Hold the infant’s head near or at the bend of your elbow. Keep the infant close to your body with her back straight and protected.

When you pick up any child, it’s important to keep your back safe. Bend at your knees and slide both of your hands under the toddler’s armpits, thumbs on the shoulders and fingers wrapped around the toddler’s back, and lift.

Put one arm under the toddler’s bottom and support her back with your other arm. Use your hip to help support the arm placed under the toddler’s bottom.