

# International Hazard Datasheet on Occupation

## Childcare Worker

### What is a Hazard Datasheet on Occupation?

This datasheet is one of the international Datasheets on Occupations. It is intended for those professionally concerned with health and safety at work: occupational physicians and nurses, safety engineers, hygienists, education and information specialists, inspectors, employers' representatives, workers' representatives, safety officers and other competent persons.

This datasheet lists, in a standard format, different hazards to which Childcare Workers may be exposed in the course of their normal work. This datasheet is a source of information rather than advice. With the knowledge of what causes injuries and diseases, it is easier to design and implement suitable measures towards prevention.






### Who is a childcare worker?

A childcare worker takes care of children, including their basic needs and education, when parents or other family members are unavailable.

### What is dangerous about this job?

- Childcare workers may be exposed to infectious diseases, including respiratory, blood-borne, gastrointestinal and parasitic pathogens, due to contact with sick children.
- Childcare workers are prone to musculoskeletal problems and back pain from carrying children and working with small, low lying equipment.
- Childcare workers may suffer from stresses and burnouts caused by psychological and organizational factors, which contributes to high job turnover.

## Hazards related to this job

<b>Accident Hazards</b> 	Burns and scalds from hot foods spilled while feeding or bathing children.	1 2
	Slips/falls causing sprained ankles from stumbling over small furniture, toys, and children.	1 3 4
<b>Physical Hazards</b> 	Cuts/bruises from play activities with children and when trying to contain a child with a temper tantrum.	1 3 5
	Noise exposure from crying and shouting children can cause headaches and migraines.	6
	Sunburns from being outside for extended periods of time while playing with children.	7
<b>Chemical Hazards</b> 	Irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat because of exposure to airborne aerosols or contact with droplets of washing and cleaning liquids.	8
	Respiratory effects of talc used to dust gloves and diapers.	3
	Latex allergy caused by exposure to natural latex gloves and other latex-containing products, like balloons.	9
	Exposure to art materials (powered paint, permanent markers, cry clay) causing respiratory and skin irritation.	8 9
	Sick Building Syndrome - dampness and mold, formaldehyde exposure.	4
<b>Biological Hazards</b> 	Risk of contracting an infectious disease (including gastrointestinal diseases, flu, varicella) due to close contact with sick children.	2 10
	Pregnant workers at high risk of exposure to Cytomegalovirus and Human Parvovirus B19, which can cause congenital infections in fetuses.	10 11
	Risk of contracting blood-borne pathogens such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C.	12
	Risk of developing a parasitic infestation like lice from close contact with children.	10
<b>Ergonomic, Psychosocial and Organizational Factors</b> 	Stress due to child behavior and guidance issues, conflict or poor communication between staff and supervisor, parent-related demands, long hours, unpaid overtime, different skills/training between workers.	6 13
	Burnout due to high turnover, job dissatisfaction, low pay, frequent face-to-face interaction with others, responsibility for others, lack of support, increased workload.	5 13
	Back, shoulder, and hands/arms sprain/strain injuries from ergonomic hazards involved in lifting, twisting, bending, and carrying loads, while carrying and assisting children and child care supplies or play equipment.	14 15
	Lower extremity especially knees, and neck/upper back/shoulder strain injuries from squatting, bending, stooping due to small child sized furniture and toys/equipment on the ground.	14 15

## Preventive measures

1	Follow safe working practices and implement routine safety checks.
2	Wear smocks/gowns and gloves (preferably non-latex) as personal protective equipment, especially with changing diapers.
3	Wear comfortable sturdy shoes with good traction. Walk carefully to avoid any obstructions.
4	Clean up toys, spills, keep general area clean and organized. Keep and maintain facilities.
5	Training on how to handle difficult children and request assistance if needed. Be aware of surroundings, have assistance for difficult situations.
6	Take frequent mini-rest breaks to close eyes and take a deep breath. Training on relaxation techniques.
7	Wear sunscreen, hats, and stay in shaded areas, and watch for symptoms of environmental stress.
8	Work in well ventilated areas. Substitute with non-toxic, hyper-allergenic cleaners and substances.
9	Use different products/substances that do not contain latex or other offending agents.
10	Wash hands frequently, especially after helping children with bathroom or changing diapers, or before preparing food and eating, and before leaving for the day. Avoid sharing personal items with children and co-workers.
11	Work with older children or avoidance of sick children if at high risk for developing initial infection or harm to fetus.
12	Vaccinations to common viruses and bacteria including influenza, Hepatitis A and B, MMR, varicella, polio, tetanus and diphtheria.
13	Procedures and counseling services should be available to workers exposed to stress. Communication between director/employer and workers should be constant and positive. Training/development of child care skills and communication with parents.
14	Use carts/cribs/strollers and other lifting/carrying devices. Use of adult sized furniture and/or stools for children to use adult sized fixtures, such as toilets and sinks.
15	Proper lifting techniques, working at adequate work heights, lower crib side before lifting child out, sit up against wall or furniture for back support, perform stretching exercises, use step stools to reach for objects, use cart to transport trash/supplies.

## Specialized Information

<b>Synonyms</b>	Childcare center workers, family childcare providers, nannies, babysitters, au pair, child caregiver, infant and toddler teacher, infant teacher, toddler teacher, before and after school daycare worker, child care teacher, teacher assistant, governess, mother's helper
<b>Definitions and/or description</b>	A childcare worker is paid to supervise and nurture children either by the parent or by an organized child care center, and provides for care of children. Responsible for the washing, cleaning, dressing, diapering, and feeding of the children. Also, helps educate and teach children, with activities such as reading, painting, drawing, handicrafts and songs. Responsible for the safe-keeping of children, monitoring and organizing play activities, documenting daily observations and information about activities, meals served, and medications administered. Providing for health and personal habits such as eating, resting and toilet habits. Assist in preparing food for children and serve meals and refreshments to children and regulate rest periods. Sanitize, organize and store toys and materials to ensure order in activity areas, as well as general cleaning of area. Perform housekeeping duties such as laundry, cleaning, dishwashing, and changing of linens. Support children's emotional and social development, including counseling to mentally disturbed, delinquent or handicapped children. Discipline children and recommend measures to control behavior, and identify signs of emotional or developmental problems to inform parent/guardian
<b>Related and specific occupations</b>	Other teaching and child related occupations according to age, e.g. kindergarten teacher, preschool and childcare center directors, preschool teachers, special education teachers, teacher assistants. Other caregiving related occupations, e.g. home health aides, occupational and physical therapy aides, personal care aides
<b>Tasks</b>	Diapering; feeding; singing; playing; teaching; putting to sleep; light housekeeping; cleaning toys; supervising; preparing food; reading; arranging lesson plans; picture taking; disciplining; driving/traveling; walking (strollers); mediating between children; changing clothes; taking out trash; painting; preparing for presentations/events; calming; performing first aid; talking to parents; crafting; performing; wiping noses; administering medicine; warming bottles
<b>Primary equipment used</b>	Toys and play equipment, art/craft supplies, books, changing tables, microwave/kitchen, cribs/cots, mats, containers, feeding utensils, cups, feeding stations/highchairs, strollers, vehicle transportation (car), car seat, radio/CD player or musical instruments, linens, bibs, diapers/diaper wipes, infant/child clothing, cleaning supplies, dishwashing supplies including bottle brushes, bottle warmer, refrigerator/freezer, baby food/food including formula/milk, kitchen, bathroom, play mats, rockers, bouncers, games, microwave, phone for emergencies, trash can
<b>Workplaces where the occupation is common</b>	Daycare centers, in-home centers, children's personal homes, worker's homes, hotels/resorts, gyms/YMCA, employer daycare centers, parties/events, cruise ships, camps (respite), airplanes/airlines.
<b>References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2013) Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition, Childcare Workers. [Internet] Retrieved from BLS: <a href="http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm">http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm</a></li> <li>Bright KA and Calabro K. (1999). Childcare workers and workplace hazards in the United States: Overview of research and implications for occupational health professionals. <i>Occupational Medicine</i>; 49(7): 427-437.</li> <li>Career Planner (2013) Child Care Worker Job Description- Part 1. Retrieved from: <a href="http://job-descriptions.careerplanner.com/Child-Care-Workers.cfm">http://job-descriptions.careerplanner.com/Child-Care-Workers.cfm</a></li> <li>O-net Online. (2013). Summary report for 39-9011.00 Childcare workers. [Internet] Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/39-9011.00">http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/39-9011.00</a></li> <li>Swanson NG et al (1994). Occupational Health and Safety Issues in Child-care Work. <i>Pediatrics</i>; 94(6): 1079-1080.</li> <li>California State Compensation Insurance Fund: Childcare worker safety. [Internet] Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.statefundca.com/safety/safetymeeting/SafetyMeetingArticle.aspx?ArticleID=329">http://www.statefundca.com/safety/safetymeeting/SafetyMeetingArticle.aspx?ArticleID=329</a></li> <li>Petrowski, J (2013). Personal interview with childcare worker.</li> <li>McGrath BJ (2007). Identifying Health and Safety Risks for Childcare Workers. <i>American Association of Occupational Health Nurses Journal</i>; 55(8): 321-325.</li> </ul>