



Knowing how to properly pick up and carry an infant or toddler given the child's size, muscle structure and age is critical to handling them safely.

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Safe infant and toddler handling

How to pick up and carry infants and toddlers

Infants and toddlers rely on adults for their care and nurturing. A significant part of that care and nurturing is carrying infants. Knowing how to properly pick up and carry an infant or toddler given the child's size, muscle structure and age is critical to handling them safely.

Infants and toddlers can develop nursemaid's elbow if they are picked up the wrong way. It is a common condition where the radius (one of the bones in the forearm) slips out of place from where it normally attaches to the elbow joint. It occurs

when a child is pulled too hard by the hand or wrist, picked up by one arm, or lifted in the air by the arms. Nursemaid's elbow generally affects children under 5.

Newborns are especially delicate because their necks aren't very strong, and their heads are very big compared to the rest of their body. Because of this, infants are particularly at risk for shaken baby syndrome. Shaking can cause bleeding in the brain and even death. Never pick up or touch an infant if you are feeling angry or frustrated.

What parents and caregivers can do

Picking up an infant or toddler:

- If the baby is lying on his or her back, slide one hand under the neck and your other hand under the lower back.
- Lean close to the baby and lift him or her as a uniform bundle, keeping the head a little higher than the rest of the body.
- If the baby is lying on his or her stomach, roll the baby over onto the back and then follow the instructions above.
- When holding an infant, always make sure you're supporting the head, neck and back.
- If someone is handing you a baby, lean close to the person and collect the baby in a tight bundle.
- Pick up a toddler by grasping under the arms or around the body.

Different ways to hold an infant:

- The most common way to carry an infant is the cradle hold. Place the baby's head in the bed of your elbow and use your arm to support the body.
- Place the baby's head over your shoulder, and use one hand to

support the head and the other to support the body.

- Hold the infant like a football with the head in your hand and her body under your arm; the feet will be pointed toward your elbow.
- Once a baby is able to hold up his or her head, you can carry the infant on your hip.
- Avoid holding the baby around the ribs. This could cause pressure resulting in a fracture.
- When putting down a baby, make sure to support the head until it touches the mattress or car seat.

Prevent nursemaid elbow and other lifting injuries:

- The best prevention for nursemaid's elbow is to be careful how a child is lifted and handled.
- Avoid pulling a child by the wrists or hands, and do not swing the child by the arms.
- When picking up a young child, grasp the toddler under the arms or around the body.