



# Childcare Matters

## Finding Care for Children with Asthma and Allergies

Newsletter 102  
Parent Edition  
May 2007

*This Month's Theme:  
Everybody Move!*

*The snow is melted. April showers have passed. It's time to get out and move your body.*

What's Inside?

**Fun Ways to Help Children Stay Fit**

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Next Month

**Back to Basics  
Child Development**

In April's issue we wrote about finding a family child care home for your child with special needs. While technically we don't classify children with asthma and allergies as having special needs, they do need a child care provider who understands their sensitivities and can provide an environment that is safe and comfortable. You cannot expect a provider to totally control the air your child breathes or the allergens in the area outside her home. However, you can look for a provider who has made her home as allergy free as possible. The following are things to look for when searching for child care for infants or preschoolers with environmental allergies or food allergies.

### Environmental Allergies

Your child may be sensitive to environmental allergies such as pollens, molds, mildews and dust mites, as well as chemical allergens, such as formaldehyde, home cleaning solutions or home fragrances. The following check list will help you when you go on your initial child care interviews. Explain to the provider that your child has allergies and you need to look for things that may irritate your child. Be sensitive to the fact that this is not only the provider's business, but her home. A provider who understands the situation will not be offended by the questions. A

child care provider who's offended may not understand your needs and may not be the right choice.

- Make sure the home is pet free. Fish tanks can be safe for



a child with allergies as long as the tank is kept clean and free of any mold and mildew.

- Avoid a home with heavy curtains that don't let in plenty of light. Curtains hold dust and can harbor mold and mildew, especially when it's humid.
- Is there a great deal of upholstered furniture? Do furniture covers look like they are kept clean? Old, worn furniture can harbor dust mites, molds and mildews.
- Are there hard floors or carpets? Ask if the carpets are vacuumed daily. Be aware of any carpets that smell of mold or mildew or don't appear to be kept clean.
- Ask if the provider has a room air

filter. These are expensive items for child care providers. If your child absolutely must sleep with the help of an air filter, offer to provide one.

- Check all window and door frames and bathrooms and kitchens, including seals on refrigerators for signs of mildew.
- Inspect the basement for signs of mold or mildew, especially if it's used as a play space. Is there a dehumidifier in the basement?
- Is there forced air heat? Does the provider use allergen reducing filters?
- Ask if all the cleaning products in the house are fragrance-free. Have a list available of products your child is sensitive to.
- Wood play sets and decking materials are beautiful but can contain harmful pesticides and mold. Plastic or metal are better choices for mold sensitive children and are easily cleaned.
- Make sure the home is free of unwanted pests. Their droppings can cause asthma and allergy symptoms.
- Are outdoor sand boxes covered so the neighborhood cats don't mistake them for a community litter box?
- Does the environment seem clean and well cared for? Is the provider open to working with you to make your child feel comfortable? Is she trained in emergency care and comfortable with your child's inhaler and other medications?

### **Allergy and Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics**

A web-site containing Information for asthma educators, family members and caretakers and a program to educate children with allergies and asthma.

[www.aanma.org](http://www.aanma.org)

## **Food Allergies**

If your child's food allergies are severe, you'll need to find a provider who understands and is willing to rid her kitchen of that food while she is caring for the children. Look for a provider who is familiar with your situation and comfortable making any changes. Call Programs for Parents to see if they have a provider who specializes in food allergies. They may have someone who has experience and cares for other children in the same situation. Some providers may provide meals and others will ask that you provide all the child's food. Either situation is fine, as long as the provider is aware that your child cannot share food or be close to the allergic food items. Your comfort level with the provider's procedures is what's most important. The following are important questions to ask on a child care interview.

- Does the provider know how to read food labels and is she willing to accommodate your child?
- Is she comfortable working closely with you when choosing food items to serve the children?
- Is she trained in emergency medicine and is she knowledgeable about the use of an Epipen?
- Is she willing to separate the food your child is allergic to into separate cabinets to avoid accidents?
- Does she understand cross contamination and have procedures in place to make sure it can't happen?
- Is she sensitive to your fears?

Severe allergies are frightening for any parent. Knowing a small slip up can cause an emergency room visit can make your work day intolerable. You need to feel safe with your chosen provider. The following will help you feel more comfortable.

1. Do not choose a provider until your child has been left for a full day and comes home without any aggravated allergies. The best providers can't totally control environmental allergies. This is the only way to make sure you've made the right choice.

## **Books for Adults**

### **The Kid Friendly Food Allergy Cookbook**

by Leslie Hammond and Lynne Marie Rominger

### **My House is Killing Me: The Home Guide for Families with Allergies and Asthma**

by Jeffrey C. May

2. Talk to you doctor and get inhalers and/or Epipens to keep at child care. We all try hard to remember to pack our child's bag properly every day. But the one day you forget, will be the day you're late for a meeting and the day your child needs the medication. You won't be able to focus if you know your child's medicine is not at child care. If the child care provider always has the current medications on hand, you can avoid an emergency situation.
3. If there are improvements your provider can make to her program that are costly, but would benefit your child, offer to help. This will be of benefit to your child and the other children in the program.
4. If you know of any specialty trainings, offer your child care provider the day off to attend.
5. Whenever you go to the doctor, update your provider with new information. She should know everything you do about your child's health, so she can provide the best care possible.

Trust is the most important part of the relationship you have with your provider. You cannot find a situation and change a provider's program to meet your specific needs. You need to look for a provider who understands your needs and is willing to make the necessary accommodations. Taking the time to find the right provider will work out best for you, the provider and your child.

## Books About Good Health

### **Finn Cooks** by Birte Müller

Finn's Mom is tired of arguing with Finn about eating a healthy diet. So she makes a deal, allowing him to purchase and eat anything he wants for one day. Finn fills his shopping cart with all his favorites. He eats candy, chocolate and doughnuts for breakfast and cheese curls for all day channel surfing. But Finn never made it through the day. He felt so bad he had to go to bed. When he awakens he decides to go out and play, walking by his decadent feast still left on the table. For dinner, he gives in to his mother's wise advice and reheats the healthy dinner left from the night before. (ages 2 - 6)

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### **Babar's Yoga for Elephants** by Laurent De Brunhoff

All that Spring air and running around revs up healthy toddlers. Babar can help slow them down with some clearly illustrated yoga poses. He demonstrates the simple cobra, which toddlers do with great ease, to the more complicated sun salutation, which toddlers can learn after many weeks of repetition. Towards the end of the book Babar teaches children about the peace and harmony that yoga brings him wherever he travels. This can be a great change of pace when everyone is feeling a bit frazzled and wound up. (any age)

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### **The Busy Body Book** by Lizzy Rockwell

When children become more verbal they begin to ask questions about their bodies and how they work. Vibrant colored illustrations of children using their bodies help the author explain how children move, breathe and digest food. There are five illustrations of our anatomy, including the skeleton, muscles, brains and nerves, lungs, heart and blood vessels and the stomach. Each one is labeled with just enough information so young children understand the process. Your youngest children will have fun labeling the children's activities illustrated on the last pages. (ages 3 - 8)

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### **From Head to Toe** by Eric Carle

Toddlers are challenged to move like the animals by imitating Eric Carle's striking illustrations on bright white backgrounds. See if they can clap like a seal or arch like a cat. The book is published in heavy cardboard and a perfect size for toddler hands. Use the story to get children up at circle time and allow them freedom of movement. (ages 1 ½ - 5)

## Take Advantage of Public Parks

Part of childhood is the freedom to run and tumble. If you live in the suburbs, you may have adequate outdoor space for this type of play. But don't worry if you live in an apartment. You have access to the biggest back yards through the Essex County Parks Program. Public parks provide a place for children to run and tumble in a very large space. They also provide playgrounds, where children can meet and socialize with other children and a place for you to meet other parents in your neighborhood. Find the park closest to you. If necessary, take public transportation and make this part of your special time with your child. Movement and sunlight are the best ways to keep you and your family in a healthy state of mind.



# Movement and Music

## Musical Freeze

Musical freeze encourages your child to run, but also teaches children how to stop and still their body. The game is simple. When the music goes on your child and his friends should run and tumble freely. When the music stops, they have to stop immediately and freeze in that position. The person who is “it”, sees who moves first. That person then becomes “it” and you repeat the game. Once the children get the hang of this, they’ll attempt to freeze in the most inventive poses, adding another creative dimension to the game. If you’re at the park without access to music, sing.

*Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity.*

**John F. Kennedy**

## Miss Mary Mack A Toddler Progression

Miss Mary Mack is a hand song that many people remember from school yards and play grounds. You can play the hand game with your toddler, using a progression that moves from the very simple to the more complicated game with a partner. The words are below with the final movements. The progression is after the song. It will take your preschooler a few years to progress to playing with a partner. The rhythm and hand play is very important to later academic skills. It’s also very exciting for you and your child to discover when they’re able to suddenly move to the next step. It’s a visual illustration of the development of their brain.

### Full Version

Miss (*cross arms over chest.*)  
Ma... (*Put both hands on thighs.*) ...ry (*Clap your hands.*)  
Mack, (*Clap right hands together with your partner.*)  
(*Clap your own hands.*)  
Mack, (*Clap left hands together with your partner.*)  
(*Clap your own hands.*)  
Mack (*Clap right hands together with a partner.*)  
(*Clap your own hands.*)  
(*Repeat the clapping pattern for the rest of the lines.*)  
All dressed in black, black, black  
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,  
All down her back, back, back,  
She asked her mother, mother, mother,  
For fifty cents, cents, cents,  
To see the elephant, elephant, elephant,  
Climb up the fence, fence, fence,  
He climbed so high, high, high,  
He reached the sky, sky, sky,  
And never came back, back, back,  
‘Til the end of July, July, July.

### Toddler Progression

1. Clap the rhythm of the song. ( 2 and 3 year olds)
2. Add the first three motions slowly and then clap the last three words. (3 and 4 year olds)
3. Replace the partner clapping with thigh clapping.

In order to be successful at stage three, children must have a more developed sense of rhythm and coordination. This takes a while for some. Play at their present level, remembering this is play and not a rush to the final step. When they’re comfortable with this, then you can show them how they can play with a partner

4. Clap with a partner but don’t cross hands.
5. You can now try the full version above. Once children know this version, you’ll find them creating ways to make it more demanding, by flipping their hands and adding other hand coordination challenges.

## More Movement Classics

### Hide and Seek

Toddlers love to play hide and seek and you won't be able to help laughing at their joy of finding you and being found. However, toddler hide and seek is not the same as school-age hide and seek. First, your toddler always needs to see a little piece of you or they just forget about the game and go off and do something else. Second, they want you to hide in the same place time after time and then they'll use the same place over and over until they tire of the game. I once tried to change the hiding place and had a group of toddlers find me, walk me over to the old place and then laugh when they found me again. Just have fun and let the children determine how they want to play the game.

### Wheels, Wheels, Wheels

Break out the riding toys. I can't think of a more enjoyable activity to help develop balance. Scooters, tricycles, bicycles with training wheels and wagons teach your preschooler to use their muscles in new ways. Stay away from skateboards and vehicles with motors. Skateboards are too challenging for preschoolers and motorized vehicles take the learning experience out of the play experience and increase the danger. Most of all, remember **helmets. No child should be on a scooter, or riding toy without one.**



### Bubbles

Preschoolers love to chase and pop bubbles. You can buy wands to make singular bubbles or many smaller bubbles. You can also get large rings to make giant bubbles, a toddler favorite. Even the most sedentary child can't help chasing a giant bubble across the park.

### Balls

Don't minimize the educational versatility of a simple rubber ball. They're inexpensive and will keep your child busy for hours. You should have a bag of balls in different sizes, making sure the smallest can't fit in anyone's mouth. The largest should be about half the height of your child. Larger balls are fun, but only when children are very sturdy on their feet. Couple balls with soft child safe plastic bats and hoops, and buckets for fill and dump play.

Use small foam balls for safe indoor play. You don't need to teach your child how to play with them. Just let them use their imagination. Buy a variety in different colors and sizes to encourage sorting activities. Light weight foam balls are also great for infants who can pick them up easily. Just make sure they don't teethe on them.

**Note:** Keep foam balls indoors and away from pets. They pick up debris outside and then pets take great pleasure in tearing them to pieces.



## You Asked?

Send your questions to  
FCCservices@programsforparents.org and  
we may answer them in the newsletter.

### My toddler won't sit still for one second when I read. Is it necessary just to go through the motions?

Parents often wonder why it's important to read to infants, who may not understand what you're saying, or toddlers, who don't always seem interested. The purpose of this is not necessarily to teach them to read, although that's important, but to show them that there is joy in reading.

You should never force an antsy toddler to read. However, there are ways that you can show a toddler that books can be fun. Many books written for this age group invite toddlers to interact with the story. Find books that invite them to move, like Eric Carle's *From Head to Toe*, or books that make them laugh, like *Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing* by Judi Barrett. Books that are paired with a CD, such as Sandra Boynton's, *Rhinoceros Tap*, will get them moving and laughing at the same time. You should also make reading part of their bedtime ritual, even if you don't feel they are listening. Rather than ask them *if* they want you to read at bedtime, ask them *what* they want you to read. They will eventually find books they enjoy. Spend leisurely time at the library or bookstore and be open to their choices, even if they're not your favorites. You can also introduce them to different formats, such as comic books. They may be attracted to their favorite superhero or TV character.

Don't think of reading to your child as teaching him to read. Focus on the joy of reading and the pleasure in time spent together. As your child grows he will remember those good feelings. When he's ready he will learn to read because he wants to, not because it's a required chore.

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## Education and Conferences

### NJAEYC Conference Health in Child Care Conference

May 30th, 2007  
Doubletree Hotel, Somerset NJ  
Go to: [www.njaeyc.org](http://www.njaeyc.org) for updated information

## WARMLINE

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