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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Child Care Safety¹

Suzanna Smith²

Parents who both work outside the home have a difficult decision—how to care for their young children while they're at work. Parents often worry about their child's safety as they evaluate various childcare options.

New research offers a comparison of the risks of injury and death in different childcare settings. According to a study published in the American Sociological Review, childcare centers might be safer than private homes. Researchers caution that overall, childcare is "quite safe," and overall is even safer than care within children's own families (Wrigley & Dreby, 2005).

Researchers from the City University of New York found that between 1989-2003, fatalities were seven times more likely to occur in family day care than in center care. Most deaths in private homes involved babies who died from being shaken "by a caregiver stressed by constant crying" (Lewin, p. A21). The workplace itself may be a crucial difference—family daycare providers have less support from other adults who can step in to help or monitor their work, have less training, and are more isolated than center providers. These findings provide more support for the importance of the providers' training, licensing and support to ensure that children are safe.

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Certainly, parents need to take a number of factors into account when making their decision about child care, such as the location of care, cost, and group size. "No one type of care is uniformly 'better' than another" for all families (Wrigley and Drebley, 2005, p. 740), and high quality family daycare can provide a warm and responsive environment, especially for infants.

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