

## Choosing A Day Care Center

Finding quality day care that fits your needs and budget is a tough job. If you put some time and thought into your decision, you are more likely to be happy you're your choice and it will last. If you are looking at a day care center, here are things you should check on when you visit the center.

Is the center licensed with the state? This means that the state's minimum health, fire and safety standards are met.

Is the center willing to let you visit at any time? You should be allowed to check on your child whenever you like.

They should be able to use good judgment in an emergency. Will they be able to discuss your particular concerns about your child with you?

Is there a place for the children to rest? Remember that some quiet time each day (even if it's not a nap) is important.

Is the center safe? Is it well lit and heated? Is there proper ventilation and heating? Is the center clean?

Are there toys, books and play equipment for the children? Is there a schedule of activities for each day? Children do better with a routine and planned activities.

What is the center's policy about pickup time? Will you be able to stick to that time? Is there an established policy about other persons picking up your child?

Are there enough workers for the number of children at the center? For kids under age 3 there should be at least one adult for every 5 children. For kids aged 3-5 there should be at least one adult for every 8-10 children.

If you are looking into a day care program in someone's home you'll want to ask the same questions you would at a center, but in addition you should check on:

Other household member that may be in the house during the day while your child is in daycare. Can you trust them?

Do you mind if the day care mother takes your child out on errands or for walks?

Will the day care mother take vacations during times when you need her?

Are you and the day care mother in agreement about how to care for and discipline your child?

Leaving your child the first few days can be hard for both of you. Remember that this is a great chance for your child to play with other children his own age. Here are a few ideas to make it a little easier.

The period between eight months and a year is a very hard time to separate, so try to start day care before or after this age.

Have a babysitter come to your house first before you take your child to daycare to see how he reacts.

Try a "test run" at the daycare center. Let your child play at the center for a few days before you return to work.

Let your toddler take along a small reminder of home. Listen to your child. Children should adapt to a new situation in a few days. If after a few days your child is still unhappy, this might not be the right daycare center for him.