



FROM THE GROWING KIDS' PARENTING RESOURCE LIBRARY

Ensuring the Safety of Your Chosen Childcare Center

Putting your child in the care of others may be one of the most difficult things you'll have to do. However, childcare might be an indispensable part of your life due to work or family circumstances, so you want to make sure the best possible care will be taken of your child. Part of keeping your child safe in a care center is doing research to find one that meets all the criteria for a secure and healthy environment for the children who spend their time there. Here are some of the most important safety features to look for in a childcare center:

- According to childcareaware.org, the adult to child ratio should be no more than 1:4 for infants, and 1:10 for four year-olds.
- Children should be under constant supervision, no matter the activity.
- Caregivers should be dedicated; a high turnover rate among caregivers might indicate job dissatisfaction or a poorly run childcare center. In addition, frequent caregiver changes may be upsetting to your child.
- Caregivers should have related advanced education or other specialized training.
- The center should have a clearly displayed government-issued license and submit to regular inspections for health and safety.
- There must be a written policy in place about caring for sick children.
- TV viewing should either be prohibited or limited.
- There should be safe places for children to sleep, eat, and play.
- Toys should be in good condition, with no jagged edges or broken pieces, and should be clean.
- Diapering must be done in a separate area, and soiled diapers should be disposed of properly.
- Perishable food must be kept refrigerated.
- Cleaning supplies and other toxic chemicals must be kept locked and out of reach of children.
- A first-aid kit should be clearly marked and easily accessible to adults.
- Stairs should be blocked by security gates at the top and bottom to prevent accidental falls.
- Each room should be equipped with fully operational smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, as well as marked exits.
- Outdoor play areas must be well enclosed, and there should be soft material such as mulch or rubber chips under play equipment to minimize the potential for injury.
- The center should have strict rules about hand washing and/or sanitizing after diapering, before feeding, and prior to food preparation.

These are the major points of safety you should be alert to when deciding on a childcare center, but this list is by no means exhaustive. A full list of the safety regulations implemented by your state can be found at www.nrckids.org.