

Is daycare a safe option during the pandemic?

December 14 2020, by Dr. Datta Munshi, American Academy Of Pediatrics



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Is it safe to send my child to a child care center during COVID-19?

It depends on where you live, the health of your child and other family members, and the steps your child care facility or provider takes to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises child care centers to work with local and state health departments to help keep children and staff as safe as possible.

Talk with your pediatrician about [child](#) care options during the COVID-19 pandemic. This can help you decide what is best for your situation, based on your child's medical history, immunizations, and by checking that growth and development are on track.

In my practice, I like to talk to parents about infection rates and pandemic developments in our community. Your pediatrician also can keep you updated on local and state health department recommendations and offer guidance.

You'll want to be comfortable with how the care center plans to clean and disinfect, screen children and [staff](#) for symptoms, and handle illness. Research suggests that [child care centers](#) do not fuel the spread of COVID-19 in communities when they take proper safety steps. Ask about:

- Cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Is the center following CDC recommendations for keeping surfaces free of germs? This includes cleaning and removing disinfectant from toys before infants and toddlers play with them.
- Daily health checks and screening. Before coming into the center each day, will children and staff have their temperature taken to make sure they do not have a fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) or other symptoms of illness?
- Testing and isolation. If someone tests positive for COVID-19, how long will that person stay home? If a child starts to feel ill during the day, is an isolation room available with proper

supervision until the child can go home? What is the policy for children and staff returning to the facility after they get better?

- Visitors. Do consultants such as speech or physical therapists use virtual options whenever possible? If mothers are allowed in to breastfeed their babies, are there separate, well-ventilated spaces available where staff can bring the infant to the mother and then carry the infant back to the group?

You'll also want to make sure the center has a plan for daily routines. This includes:

- Personal and group contact. Who will have contact with your child? Will there be a limited number of children in each group?
- Protective gear. Will staff be required to wear cloth face coverings and encourage children ages 2 and older to wear masks? Do staff have access to multiple smocks, gloves, and other protective gear?
- Time outside. Do groups regularly spend time outdoors, when the weather is nice, to help reduce the spread of the virus? Does everyone wash their hands before and after outdoor play?
- Meals, snacks, and naps. Will the center keep children physically distanced during meals, snacks, and naps? If children stay with the same small group all day, it may not be necessary to keep them 6 feet apart when eating. Infants should still be held when being fed and staff should always avoid bottle propping. When [children](#) nap, they can be placed head to foot, and they should not wear masks.
- Drop-off and pickup. Are arrival times staggered to help avoid contact between groups? Are drop-offs and pickups done outside?

When it comes to the best child care options during the pandemic, there is not one right answer for every family. Talk to your pediatrician and

child care facility or provider about concerns you may have.

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