

Preparing Baby for Childcare

Childcare is a big transition for mom, dad, and baby. It's helpful to plan ahead to make your baby's transition into childcare as stress-free as possible for you, your baby, and your new childcare. The following are basic preparations that will help you, your baby, and your provider to enjoy their first few weeks of childcare.

#1. Practice Safe Sleep at Home

In Minnesota, childcare providers are prohibited from placing an infant to sleep with a blanket or lovey (please see our Safe Sleep Policy) and infants must be placed on their backs to sleep for every rest time. For the sake of your baby's safety and happiness, **please do not allow baby to sleep with a blanket at home and place baby on his/her back for every rest time.** A baby who is used to having a blanket or lovey to sleep with at home will likely cry and be upset for every naptime until he/she turns 1 and can finally have a blanket in bed. Likewise, with tummy sleeping until baby can roll independently from front to back and back to front. Switching from back to tummy sleeping increases the SUID rate by **18%**. If swaddling, please discontinue at least two weeks before your baby's start date. Swaddling is not recommended, and we do not swaddle in childcare.

#2. Bottle Feeding

If baby is solely breastfed, please have dad, grandparents, etc. offer feedings with a bottle during the weeks leading up to childcare to help baby get used to eating by bottle. Some infants that are solely breastfed will refuse bottle feeding. A hungry baby who refuses the bottle is an unhappy baby and your infant needs nutrition throughout the day for proper growth and development. Think about using a babysitter a few times before starting childcare to help baby get used to other people and give you and dad a break together!

#3. Time for Play

Attachment is vital during these first few months of an infant's life and supervised tummy time is also very important for development. We love to hold our babies and should! For babies to build upper body strength and get used to playing independently from time to time, setting them down is important. A baby that is accustomed to being held all day will be fussy and unhappy when the provider needs to attend to the needs of the other children in care and we want baby to enjoy both being held and having a little bit of independent play to explore the environment.

It's also a great idea to expose baby to a variety of noises and faces, so that a group of new young friends and faces isn't scary. It's also not uncommon for infants to get a cold within their first few weeks of childcare, because they are being exposed to new germs. In fact, the average infant has between 6-10 cold per year. Avoid providing a sterile environment prior to childcare, unless medically necessary. A few germs help to boost the immune system and prevent repeated illness.

#4. Bring Supplies Ahead of Time

A week or so before beginning childcare, drop off enrollment forms, diapers, 2 changes of clothes, wipes, a pacifier (if necessary), 3 bottles and 3 nipples. This will allow the first day to just be about you and your baby! Also, write down baby's current schedule and a little bio about his/her likes, dislikes, habits, and personality for your provider. This will help providers get to know your baby and it's fun to look back on them years later!

#5. The First Day

Get a goodnight's sleep and start out early, so you have enough time to say goodbye and aren't rushed. Call or email and check up on your baby throughout the day. Leaving your baby at childcare for the first time comes with lots of tough emotions. Give a call and check in to see how your baby's day is going and connect with us!

We hope to make the transition to childcare as smooth and happy as possible for everyone. These practices will help to make the transition from home to childcare less stressful for your new little one and you. You will also begin your childcare relationship with your provider on a good note! If you have any questions or concerns regarding these tips, please contact me. We look forward to getting to know your most precious, new family member and seeing him or her learn and grow over the coming years. Welcome to childcare!