

is it safe to send kids to child care?

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has changed daily life. But many parents and caregivers need to go to work, and wonder if it's safe to send their kids to childcare.

This decision is a personal one. When thinking about childcare options, you'll have to weigh the need for work with the health and safety of your family. Only you will know when the time is right — and what situation is best for your child.

Here are some steps to take and questions to ask before making a choice about childcare.

step 1: find out about coronavirus cases in your area

First, you'll want to know if the number of coronavirus cases in your area is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same. Maybe you live in an area that hasn't been hit hard by the pandemic.

Call your local health department for this information, or visit their website. You also can check your local newspaper. Many news outlets regularly report this information by area or zip code.

step 2: consider the health risks

Some people are more likely to get very ill from coronavirus. This includes adults over 65 years old and people of any age who have other health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, or immune system problems. Babies younger than 12 months old might get sicker from coronavirus than older kids.

If your child is under 1 year old, has a health condition, or lives with someone who has a health condition, you'll want to weigh the risk of your child's exposure to germs in the community. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about this.

step 3: know limits on group gatherings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends against large group gatherings. Many states and cities have their own limits on group gatherings. Find out the guidelines in your area and ask about group sizes as you check out childcare options.

step 4: ask questions and put safety first

Whether you're thinking about sending your child back to your regular care provider or finding a new one, put safety first and weigh the pros and cons. Before you make a decision, ask about:

- **The number of children allowed.** How many children will be cared for? Will the center operate at partial or full capacity?
- **Group sizes.** How many kids will be together in a group or class? Will small groups be the same every day and always have the same teacher or caregiver?

(continued on reverse)



step 4: ask questions and put safety first (continued)

- **Staggered shifts.** Will the center stagger activities so that fewer kids eat, play, or nap together at once?
- **Physical distancing.** How will they keep kids 6 feet apart during mealtimes, activities, and naps? Are there enough rooms or areas so groups can stay separated?
- **Drop-off and pick-up.** What are the drop-off and pick-up procedures? Do they have staggered times and curbside drop-off and pick-up?

Ask about the steps they'll take to stop the spread of germs while kids are there. How will they identify any sick people and report possible exposures? Find out about:

- **Health screening.** How will children and staff be screened before entering the center? Will staff ask about symptoms and take temperatures?
- **Health monitoring.** How are kids and staff members monitored throughout the day? What's the process for isolating someone who gets sick? How will they let you know if your child was in contact with a kid or staff member who gets sick?
- **Hand washing.** What are the hand-washing policies for children and staff? What's the availability of water, soap, and hand sanitizer?
- **Face masks and gloves.** Who will need to wear face coverings (or masks) and gloves? Children under 2 years old should not wear masks.
- **Cleaning.** How will surfaces, toys, playground and sports equipment, and other items be cleaned and disinfected? How often will they be cleaned?

Having this information will help you make the best decision for your child and family.



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