



Introducing Your Child to Child Care

Adjusting to Child Care

Depending on your child's age, personality, stage of development and special considerations, feeling comfortable in child care may take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Each child will adapt to his/her own pace. Children who seem to adapt immediately may go through a period of adjustment a week or two after starting child care.

How You Can Help

You can help your child by preparing yourself and your child before starting child care. Provide information about your cultural practices, as well as your child's routines and activities at home to the Educator.

To gain confidence with your child care arrangement and help your child become accustomed to a child care setting:

- Make sure you feel good about the child care program. If you feel anxious about your decision, your child will sense it and become anxious too. Talk to your child care provider about any lingering doubts or questions you may have as soon as possible. Often questions can be easily answered. Speak positively about the child care setting and the people who will be there before care begins. Your child's attitude is likely to reflect your confidence and enthusiasm.
- Visit the centre or home with your child ahead of time and more than once if possible. Your child can meet the child care provider and other children and become familiar with what happens there. You will also be able to ask questions and observe activities in the child care setting.
- Arrange a time when the child care provider is available to meet with you to talk about your child's needs.
- Leave your child with others occasionally and increase the amount of time as your child care start date approaches. It is important for you to be able to trust someone else with your child.
- Begin care gradually, if possible. For example, on the first day, take your child for an hour or so, and then leave together. For the next few days stay for a few hours.

As your child becomes more comfortable, leave for a short time. Gradually increase the time away until your child is spending the full day in care.

- Allow your child to take a favourite toy or object such as a teddy bear or blanket that will be a reminder of you or of home. These items may comfort your child when everything else is new. Ask the program how this works so you can support your child.
- Pick up your child at the time you said you would, your child is counting on you coming. Use words such as “after snack time” or “after nap time” that they will understand.
- Say “goodbye”, even if your child is playing happily. State clearly when you will be back, using words your child understands. For example, “I will be back after you finish your snack and play outside.” Your child needs to feel certain that you will return and is counting on your to return at the time given. If you disappear without saying anything, your child may get upset.
- Keep going, once you have said goodbye. If you hesitate, you may confuse your child.
- Greet your child warmly. At the end of the day your child may be tearful or simply ignore you. Understand that this is a normal part of getting used to child care.
- Have realistic expectations. It will take time to adjust to the new schedule.
- Breastfeeding mothers may continue to breastfeed even after care starts. Some mothers are able to pump milk, and provide it to the Educator in a bottle or cup. You may wish to discuss breastmilk policies with the Educator. You may also discuss your breastfeeding options by Halton Region at 311 to speak with a Public Health Nurse.
- Plan ahead and simplify your life for the first few months e.g., stock your freezer, set up routines.
- Arrange for back-up care in case of emergency. Introduce your child to the back-up situation once he/she has settled into the program.

For more information, please contact the Child Care Directory and Information Line at childcaresearch@thrc.ca or 905-875-0235.