

Caring for Baby

Your childcare checklist

You can't wait to meet your baby, spend time with him and get to know him. So how can you even begin to think about leaving him in the care of someone else? While it may seem early, making decisions about what kind of care would be best for you and your baby is important to think about now. This is especially true if you are considering day care. With wait lists averaging 1-2 years in some cases, it may be important to get your name on a list now - while you're pregnant.



Ask.

Ask the following questions to help you decide what kind of childcare program is the best fit for you and your baby:

- Are you taking maternity leave – and for how long?
- What kind of childcare environment do you want?
- How large or small a setting do you prefer?
- What hours will you need childcare for?
- How flexible are your work hours?
- How much can you afford?
- Would you prefer a family or close friend to care for your baby?
- How important is location?
- Do you want your baby to attend a school-affiliated day care with the option to continue on at the school?

Ask friends, family or your paediatrician for a referral — someone else's experience can help guide your future childcare experience.

Research.

Now that you have a better idea of what kind of childcare you want for your baby – and when you’ll need it – you can begin researching the options in your area.

1. Find out what’s available (e.g. au pair, nanny, providers who work out of the home, family, day care centres).
2. Evaluate types of care available.
3. Find out the average wait time for admission into childcare facilities.
4. Conduct a search through a local referral or social service agency, childcare council or non-profit childcare advocacy group.
5. Conduct phone interviews.
6. Set up on-site tours.
7. Inquire about deposits and wait lists.

Remember, if you're thinking about day care as an option, be sure to register as soon as possible because some wait lists are one year or longer.

If you’re planning on an extended maternity leave or staying home for a few years, finding a little “me-time” will be easier if you have someone you can trust and who is ready and waiting for your call. Having a grandparent, aunt or friend to call for a little mid-day support can be a big help – especially during the first few months as you adjust to your new life with baby.