

# Starting In care



## Introduction

*That morning you send your toddler off to child care for the first time, there are often tummies filled with butterflies, tears and anxious goodbyes – and that's just the parents! Sending your child to day care, whether it's a centre, family care or a nanny, can be an anxious time for everyone, but there are ways to help make introducing child care a smooth process for the whole family.*

## Statutory Legislation & Considerations

- ◆ Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- ◆ Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

## Before The Big Day

Preparation is the key for a painless start to formal care such as child care. Start talking to your toddler early on about where she is going, how fun it is and what she will do there. Explain what the child care routine will be and reassure her that you'll be there to pick her up in the afternoons. There are parenting books available that tell stories about going to child care or preschool and these may be a good introduction.

Before your toddler begins child care, it's a really good idea to spend some time with her at the centre or home where she'll be. It may just be an hour or two, but it will make her more familiar with the child care centre with the safety of you being with her. This will also give you a chance to talk to the carers about your toddler's routine and things that may help settle her. Make sure you answer any questions your child may have about child care openly and honestly. If possible, try sending her for some shorter days – an hour, a half day – to help her settle in to the idea of day care gradually.

## On The First Day

- On the first day of child care, make sure you're organised so that you're not rushing around.
- Pack a favourite toy or blanket so she has something familiar with her.
- Arrive early so you have time to settle your toddler in.
- Ensure that you're not feeling too anxious. If you are, hide it best you can - it's likely your child will pick up on this and feel unsettled.
- Help your child find an activity she really likes and join in for a few minutes.
- When it's time to go, give her a confident goodbye and let her know you'll be back later in the day to collect her.
- Don't sneak out of the child care centre without her knowing - this will make her anxious at future drop-offs.

If your departure from the child care centre is traumatic, resist the temptation to go back and check on your toddler. She may have settled in and you only risk upsetting her again. If you're worried, give the carer a call to see how she is. Be warned, sometimes a child may have settled in fine and been happy all day, but will dissolve into tears when the parent comes to collect them.

## After The First Day

While your toddler is settling into her new child care routine, try and keep her home life as calm and consistent as it was. Now is not the time to transition her into a big girl bed or toilet train her. Also, try and keep your child care routine the same – how and when you drop her off. This will give her a sense of security.

If the drop-offs are very distressful, your toddler is showing signs of separation anxiety, or just not improving there are steps you can take:

- See if it's possible if your partner, parent or a friend can drop your toddler off. She may be more upset about your departure than the child care place.
- Talk to her carers and see if there is anything happening during the day that may be upsetting her or what she's like after you leave. The carers may have some helpful suggestions.
- Talk to your toddler about what is upsetting her about child care, make sure you listen and reassure her.

*Information sourced from: [www.kidspot.com.au](http://www.kidspot.com.au)*

*For more information or if you have any questions, please speak with your child's teacher or Centre Director*

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