

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance specialists at Bouchard Insurance

Choosing a Child Care Facility

Focus on healthy programs

Recent research links child care facilities with children's health, particularly in children who spend a large portion of their day in child care. The facility you choose can affect your child's health while teaching habits and behaviors – whether good or bad.

What Should I Focus On?

The two most important factors for children to maintain good health and a healthy weight are nutrition and physical exercise. When researching facilities, be sure to inquire about the types of meals and snacks served, and ask what type of physical activity children participate in on a daily basis.

Know State Regulations

Federal regulations apply only to facilities that receive federal funding, but each state has standards for child care providers licensed in that state. You can find state-specific regulations at nrc.uchsc.edu/STATES/states.htm.

Nutrition

State standards represent a minimal requirement, so facilities meeting those

standards may still be lacking in nutrition. Ask for a menu of meals and snacks served to get an idea of their general nutritional value.

Studies show that many child care facilities tend to serve unhealthy options such as cookies, French fries and hot dogs. Those foods are fine occasionally, but on a regular basis, the facility should:

- Offer whole-grain products, such as whole grain crackers or bread
- Serve fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products
- Provide plenty of fruits and vegetables daily
- Limit total fat intake to between 25 and 35 percent of total calories – and most fat should come from polyunsaturated and monounsaturated sources such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils

Physical Activity

Children need physical activity every day in order to develop coordination, strengthen muscles and maintain a healthy weight. Ask prospective facilities how much physical activity your child will get each day.

Your child should be able to play indoors and outdoors, in both structured and unstructured physical activities, daily. Also, screen time (television, computer, video games) should be very limited.



Did you know...?

Childhood obesity is a serious epidemic – 30 percent of American children are overweight or obese. Obesity can lead to significant health problems and social challenges for children. Choosing a healthy child care facility is an important step in encouraging childhood health and weight management.