

Toddler 18 Months to 3 Years

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Daycares and Nutrition



When it comes to the nutritional requirements of our children, daycare plays a big role.

Finding a daycare or homecare situation for your child is always a challenge. Ensuring that children are placed in a care giving situation that meets their needs emotionally while providing the right balance between stimulating activities and quiet time is a must. Then there's the question of whether or not the environment is a safe one, such as seeing that toxic substances are locked up out of children's reach.

One area that often gets overlooked when it comes to childcare is mealtime. Yet considering that a child will be having at least one main meal plus snack time at the daycare, how food is handled is an important question. Since much of your child's nutritional requirements will be met while in child care, it's a good idea to visit the daycare or homecare situation during a mealtime, says Eleanor Brownridge, nutritionist and author of "I'm Hungry". Brownridge says when you go to visit a daycare "talk to the person in charge about the menus. Have they been thought through? Are they well planned? Do they include foods from the Food Guide? In other words, are there milk products, protein foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grains? Are there appropriate snacks? You'll want to know that snacks are appropriately planned and nutritious."

It's also important to note the cleanliness of the food preparation area and how the food is served in that environment. Brownridge says the questions to ask yourself are "does the caregiver sit down with the children and make it a pleasant situation? Are appropriate sized servings being offered to the children? Are they allowed to relax and eat or is the food being shoveled into them? Are they being coaxed or offered rewards for eating? You don't want to establish these attitudes at home and not at the daycare as well."

So when looking for a daycare situation, don't overlook one of the most important areas in your child's life - food!

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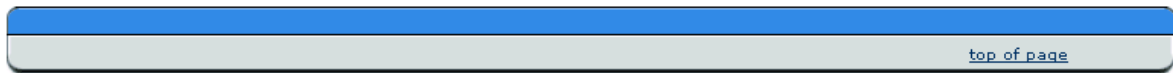
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