

# COVID-19

## CHILD CARE AT HOME: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

### What is best for my child? A decision that belongs to you.



As Quebec is preparing to deconfine gradually, families' questions are as numerous as the challenges to overcome. One of the recurring questions remains: "Which is the best decision for the welfare of my child?"

First, it is important to remember that the choice of educational daycare or not, schooling of your child [at school or at home](#), is a family and personal choice. It is determined by each family's specific situation and there is no wrong answer. This unheard period is high in emotions and there are no handbooks on how to get through a worldwide pandemic successfully.

That being said, if you hesitate between sending your child at school or daycare, keeping them at home with you or if neither of these options is good for your family, you might be interested in discovering two (2) other options available to you:

- ⇒ Have someone take care of your child at your home;
- ⇒ Establish a closed partnership with another family.

The [Fédération québécoise des organismes communautaires Famille](#) (FQOCF) presents this practical guide to help you make an informed choice.

### HAVING SOMEONE TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHILD IN YOUR HOME: USEFUL TIPS

#### 1. Choosing the right person

It is possible to ask a reliable person to keep an eye on your child in your home. Be it a neighbour, a friend, a family member or someone else, while respecting [sanitary measures and social distancing](#) decreed by the government are essential. If you consider asking the help of a babysitter, you should ensure, above and beyond [usual elements](#), that the person is:

- Able to maintain a distance with your child. A teenager or neighbour might be a better choice than an uncle or aunt or friend that your child is used to hug;
- Available for the different periods of care required to minimize the risks of contagion from several persons. For example, avoid situations where multiple babysitters are needed;
- Aged [less than 70 years old](#) and in a good health. (ex: no chronic or breathing illness, diabetes, etc.).



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### 2. Foster clear communication

Before starting the « partnership », make sure you have:

- A good conversation with the person to share your mutual expectations: frequency of external contacts, number of visits, the child's needs, material supplied or not, how to use them, and the compliance with sanitary measures, etc.;
- In the event that your child caregiver is a teenager, a discussion with the teenager's parents beforehand;
- A reminder of [sanitary measures](#) on a regular basis, by displaying them at the entrance of your house as an example;
- Your child's participation in the discussion, if he or she is of age to understand what is at stake.



### 3. Ensure sanitary measures are respected

The [sanitary measures](#) are essential and must be understood by all members of the family and the person taking care of the children. The following suggestions are based on the [health and safety measures in daycare services](#):

- Verify absence of [symptoms](#) associated with the disease (unusual coughing, fever, difficulty breathing, sudden loss of smell, etc.) for the children and anyone residing under the same roof, or anyone placed under confinement because of COVID-19;
- Plan wearing a [mask or face covering](#) as recommended for persons in direct contact with children when they cannot maintain the 2-meter distance;
- Plan hand washing for everyone as soon as they arrive or at the entrance of the house, with soap and water ( for at least [20 seconds](#)) or with an alcohol-based disinfectant solution. You must [wash your hands](#) several times a day: before meals, after touching the toilet, door handles or taps, stairs ramps, etc. Finally, washing your hands again before leaving the house;
- In the presence of very young children, tie up long hair and wash every surface touched by the child's secretions;



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- If there are secretions on the child's or caregiver's clothing, change the clothing, put the contaminated clothing in a bag and close it until time to wash it. Plan on having several clothing changes close at hand;
- [Cough and sneeze in your elbow](#);
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with hands potentially contaminated.

#### 4. Prepare in advance

To facilitate the care and limit contacts, you can accomplish [certain tasks](#) beforehand which will help make a difference to ensure the sanitary measures are followed:

- Display the desired schedule to encourage buy-in and understanding of measures for all (see below for an example of a schedule);
- Prepare snacks and meals in advance to minimize contacts. For example, bring a lunchbox with a cold lunch or a thermal container that the child will be able to handle by himself;
- Select toys that can be cleaned easily (in the dishwasher for example). Put out of sight the toys difficult to clean, those that require you to be close to the child or the ones that can easily create conflicts;
- Disinfect daily kitchen, bathroom and play surface areas;
- Set cleaning material in sight and at easy reach for the caregiver. Toxic products must be kept out of reach of young children;
- Identify a single place where the babysitter can leave their personal effects without having to be in contact with the family's clothing;
- Plan to have a hydroalcoholic disinfectant solution (ex: Purell) in the entrance to be used by the babysitter upon arrival and departure.



#### 5. Encourage physical distancing

In this case, as in [school](#) or in [daycare](#), absolute social distancing is not realistic. Without aiming for perfection, setting in advance some strategies will allow to decrease the risks:

- Distance chairs, sofas, mattress used for the naps;



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- Plan for games and activities that can be done while respecting the 2-meter distance;
- Assign and respect children's and babysitter's places at the dining table.

In many cases, at least one of the parents will be home or teleworking. In case of a tantrum, it is possible for the parent to intervene and console the child and ensure physical contact. A convenient advantage for this option.



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### SAMPLE OF A SCHEDULE

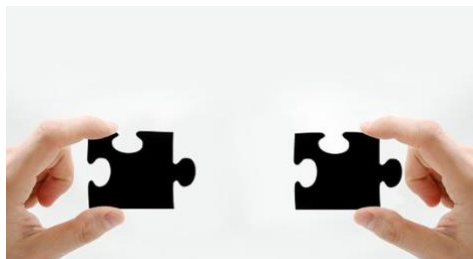
Time	Activity	Precision
9 AM	Arrival of the sitter at the home	Remove shoes and coat in the entrance hallway and put them in the designated location.
	Washing of hands for everyone	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
	Reminder of <a href="#">sanitary measures</a> to the child and babysitter	
	Tour of the house to show set up and exchange on the expectations (academic support, schedule, etc.)	
	Outside activity	Ex: walk, games in the yard or without contact (avoid park structures) , etc.
10 AM	Washing of hands for everyone	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
	Snack	If possible, prepare them in advance to avoid unnecessary manipulations.
	Washing of hands for everyone	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
	Directed activity	A selection of themed activities can be found for free at <a href="http://www.fqocf.org/covid-19">www.fqocf.org/covid-19</a>
Noon	Washing of hands, cleaning kitchen and table surfaces	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
	Lunch	If possible prepare the meals in advance to avoid unnecessary manipulations.
	Washing of hands for everyone	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
	Reading a story	
	Rest period, nap or activity	According to age.
3 PM	Washing of hands for everyone	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
	Snack	If possible, prepare them in advance to avoid unnecessary manipulations.
	Washing of hands for everyone	Always respect <a href="#">hygiene standards</a> .
5 PM	Directed activity	A selection of themed activities can be found for free at <a href="http://www.fqocf.org/covid-19">www.fqocf.org/covid-19</a>
	Hand washing before leaving the house and blowing kisses from a distance	



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### ESTABLISHING A CLOSED PARTNERSHIP WITH ANOTHER FAMILY: PRATICAL TIPS



Another possibility that can be envisioned for parents that cannot welcome a person into their house: establishing a babysitting exchange with another trusted family.

In [Alberta](#), in [British Columbia](#) and in [New-Brunswick](#), for example, certain policies, including the « two homes » are already in place. It allows two households to frequent each other freely. This option is currently [under study by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec](#). Meanwhile, it remains possible to establish such exchanges of childcare to [provide support](#).

The [sanitary measures and social distancing](#) mentioned in the first section remain essential and are to be applied fully.

Certain particularities and elements require consideration to establish these exchanges of childcare services between two families:

#### 1. Choose the right family for the exchange

- Determine together the criteria, some personal but certainly based on confidence and transparent communication;
- Agree that the two families will not be in contact with other families;
- Rapidly inform the members of the closed partnership of any changes in situation or potential risks.

#### 2. Avoid contact with other people

- Favor, if possible, agreements with two families doing telework.
  - ★ If both households mingle and there is physical proximity in the workplace and public transportation, then the sanitary measures are compromised. This is an [important reminder](#), since transmission of the virus is directly linked to the number of contacts within the population.

#### 3. Favor a family that lives close to you

- Ideally choose a family that lives close to your home to limit unnecessary travel on long distances.



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#### 4. Take the children's age in consideration

- According to its own reality, each family makes the choices that it considers applicable or has an acceptable risk. Depending on the family situation, it may be possible to favor contact amongst children of similar age;
- Take particular care of younger children who might find understanding and respecting social distancing more difficult.



#### 5. Be transparent

- The current situation that Quebec families are living today is unique. Such agreements will certainly bring its share of challenges and will require an adaptation period. No matter the environment, be it at home, at daycare or school, we have to keep in mind that not everything will be perfect and that some contact and mistakes are inevitable;
- By establishing a clear and common plan, by keeping an open communication and respecting as best you can the public health sanitary measures, it is possible to limit the risks for every members of each family.

#### Tax credit for childcare available

Depending on the case, solutions proposed above can be admissible for a provincial child care tax credit, for further details, consult the *Revenu Québec* website by clicking [here](#).

#### More choices for your family's specific needs

These child care options are proposed to provide a [mental health and physical balance](#) for parents and children while applying sanitary measures currently in force. Thanks to concerted efforts by all, the goal will be achieved. Note that the situation changes rapidly, the FQOCF invites you to stay aware of the latest Quebec public health directives.

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