



Infant Care at Treehouse Learning

Choosing care for your infant away from home involves a level of trust in other adults that is unmatched in its importance and sensitivity. At Treehouse Learning we are diligent regarding the safety and security of your child. While physical safety issues can be easily identified, your infant's ability to feel secure is tied to high quality, reliable relationships. Along with physical safety, secure relationships are essential for a child's ability to develop cognitively and emotionally.

During the activities and routines of each day, our Treehouse Learning teachers intentionally invest in a loving "secondary" relationship with your child, extending the safety and security of your home to our setting. This is accomplished through mutual communication with parents combined with respectful, positive interactions with your child. Prospective and newly enrolled parents are especially encouraged to ask questions and communicate actively with us. We share a common goal with parents on behalf of each child in our care, and we cherish the opportunity to contribute!

The Licensed Child Care Center

As a licensed child care center, Treehouse Learning is monitored by the Colorado Department of Health and Human Services, and we are dedicated to meeting and exceeding minimum requirements. There are many additional regulations unique to caring for infants and toddlers. All licensing and health department requirements are observed in our daily routines and expressed in program policies as well. For example, requirements for immunizations and an infant health plan are part of our enrollment agreement.

Infants are defined as children under 18 months. However, Colorado Licensing defines toddlers as children at least 12 months of age and walking.

The overlapping months on these definitions allow flexibility for newly eligible toddlers. At Treehouse Learning we use our pair of infant rooms, Garden and Mountain, to provide an appropriate setting for very young as well as physically challenging activities for older infants. While children nap and eat in their assigned rooms based on age, they are free to explore either room as appropriate. These adjoining rooms share staff and resources, providing quiet zones and active times as needed.

Our older children in the Mountain Room gain confidence and maturity as they enjoy the additional measure of safety and security of a small familiar group. Within the Mountain Room, children learn to nap on cots and practice feeding themselves, facilitating an easy transition to Cedar or Dogwood, our first toddler rooms. Transitions to new classrooms include the opportunity for a parent-teacher conference and some practice visits in advance of the move. With two infant rooms, we gain extra flexibility during the day, since children and teachers may use either room for a specific need or activity.

Only 10 infants are permitted in any infant room, and Colorado Licensing requires a credentialed “Infant Nursery Supervisor” for every 20 infants. At Treehouse Learning, our infant rooms may have a maximum of 9 infants (based on room size). The term “ratio” is used to describe the maximum number of children for each teacher or caregiver. Currently, Colorado Licensing allows ratios of 5:1 for infants and also for toddlers under two years of age. Group size and ratio information are posted in every classroom, per licensing regulations.

At Treehouse Learning, we typically enroll and staff at ratios of 4:1 or lower in our infant rooms. Equally important, our infant teachers at Treehouse Learning are carefully selected and well-versed in child development due to formal credentialing requirements and program goals for continuing education. Infant staff are expected to acquire the Infant Nursery Supervisor credential during the course of their employment—be sure ask about our infant staff’s formal education in caring for infants.

Safety and Health Practices

The entrance of Treehouse Learning facility is our first commitment to physical safety and security. Each family has an individual door code for access, and the door is monitored by a security camera. Colorado licensing requires a written log and identification for all visitors. Likewise, we require written authorization and identification each time anyone other than a parent is asked to pick up a child. Our Enrollment Agreement and Parent Handbook include additional detail regarding our health and safety policies.

The physical environment of our infant rooms is largely governed by Colorado licensing. In addition to being free from obvious dangers, we are required to separate sleeping infants from play areas. You will see that appropriate toys are accessible to children and crawling age babies are encouraged to move around the room on the floor. We provide plenty of tummy time so that infants can develop the muscle strength necessary for mobility. Carpeting on our classroom floors offers a friendly surface for play, and parents are asked to remove shoes before entering our infant rooms. Paint and carpeting were selected to minimize environmental hazards throughout the facility.

At Treehouse Learning, our commitment to maintaining a healthy environment for our children is noticeable and consistent. Throughout the Treehouse Learning facility, children, parents, and teachers regularly engage in hand washing, one of the easiest and most effective methods to reduce the spread of communicable disease. You will also notice the following health-related practices:

- We remove toys from play and sanitize them if they have been in a child’s mouth.
- We strictly observe diaper changing procedures as outlined by Colorado Licensing and Health Department expectations.
- We launder sheets and sanitize cribs each time there is a change due to part time schedules in the infant room.
- We pay special attention to the labeling and handling of formula, breast milk, and food.
- We maintain separate containers for each child’s supplies, clothes, blankets, and soft cuddly toys.
- To better maintain a clean play area, we ask parents and visitors to remove their shoes in our infant rooms.

Preventing disease in a child care setting is challenging due to many variables. Extra rest time and shorter days at first can also support an infant's physical and emotional resiliency. Breast feeding is also known to improve an infant's immune system. Parents are welcome to feed and care for their infants at Treehouse Learning, including nursing mothers.

Secure and Respectful Relationships are the Key to Growth and Development!

In addition to needing an environment free of hazards, your child needs to feel safe and secure. A child who does not feel secure will not eat well, sleep well, or enjoy new learning experiences away from home. At Treehouse Learning our teachers will get to know your child, establishing trust and developing a respectful relationship. Using verbal and visual cues, we explain and let our infants know that we will soon change a diaper or give a bottle. Our care giving routines and curriculum are always intentional so that each child is happy, content, and learning away from home.

Curriculum for infants

At Treehouse Learning we define curriculum as everything that happens all day, and we believe that every moment counts. This is especially true in our infant rooms where care giving routines comprise a large part of the day. At first, the infant will simply permit new adults to offer comfort and security within their care giving routines. Diapering, for example, is a special time for baby and teacher to talk and laugh together.

With consistency, warmth, and genuine interest, our Treehouse teachers help your infant develop trust, laying the foundation for learning and growth. Knowledgeable and intentional teachers within a supportive learning environment can provide the opportunity for babies to develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially. Our teachers observe NAEYC and licensing "Best Practice" throughout their care giving routines and interactions with each child.

Within a group environment, children expand their capacity to adapt to new experiences and to enjoy being with other children. They develop resiliency and adaptability within safe boundaries. Typical activities include visual stimulation, playing and talking with teachers, singing, reading aloud, listening to lively as well as soothing music, and simple games. Infants are also encouraged to explore the room, seeking interesting toys, activities, and books. Abundant exposure to language and literacy, including sign language, begin in our infant room at Treehouse Learning. Except for severe weather days, infants will have outdoor time. Buggy rides in the immediate vicinity are offered with parental permission.

Preparing for Care at Treehouse Learning

Our enrollment process at Treehouse Learning involves two preliminary visits so that our teachers gain valuable information and insight before the first day. You will be asked to bring bottles or food so that we can practice feeding. We will also ask for current and detailed information about your child's preferences and habits, along with instructions on feeding and sleeping.

Your initial visits might also include practice sessions consisting of saying goodbye and returning when your child appears comfortable (rather than tearful). In a short period of time, your child will learn and trust that you always come back.

Your child's initial adaptation in a new setting can be improved by adjusting some home routines so that they better match the realities of group care. For example, introduce some background noise and light into your infant's nap schedule to minimize some of the differences between home and school. Children who are held constantly at home are likely to have a more difficult adjustment to a group environment. Ideally, your child can learn to be happy on the floor, knowing by your voice and eye contact that you are nearby. You can also help your infant acquire confidence that his or her needs will be met. When your baby is mildly hungry, for example, you can offer verbal encouragement and assurance during a short waiting period.

Social skills in particular are an asset to any child. Selected adults can be introduced to your infant who can hold, feed, and play with your child at a young age. Enlarging your baby's immediate world with new people and places creates greater adaptability.

The initial age for care away from home can affect an infant's adjustment to a new setting. Infants at four months of age generally go along with their parents' choices. By eight months, however, your child may object to a change of people and place. Be aware that your infant responds to your clues and cues. Do your best to communicate your basic confidence and trust in the particulars of the new setting.

Early pick up time, especially at first, can help a child's successful transition with new people and the extra rest at home is important to maintain a healthy immune system.

Successful Morning Routines

Begin the night before to assure that clothes, food, and supplies are organized for all family members who are leaving for the day. Transitions from home, especially with an infant, take extra time! To create calm and efficient morning routines, consider reducing or eliminating noisy distractions, particularly television and radio. Travel time with relaxing music and conversation can also help promote a smooth arrival routine.

When you arrive at Treehouse Learning, take a moment or two to help your child connect with his/her teacher or engage in an activity. Your goodbye should be brief and quiet, up close and personal. Tell your child that you will be leaving soon and that you (or your spouse) will be back later, and that you always come back. With this closure, you are free to pick the right moment to leave the room quietly, trusting that your child will have a good day. Avoid asking for a wave goodbye at the door, as this can unnecessarily upset an otherwise content infant.

While young infants are not likely to protest when parents depart, older infants will communicate their preference to have parents with them at all times. Leaving a crying or unhappy child behind can be a particular heartache. Call in for a report, or circle back around for a look through the observation window. For most children, the tears end quickly after the parent's departure.

Pickup Time!

Many children who have had a good day will burst into tears when parents arrive for pickup! Be prepared! Your child has "held it together" away from home, and these tears are both a greeting and a call for the comfort that only a parent can offer at the end of a day away from home. If possible, use pick up time to walk around the room together and talk about what you see together, making an effort to share your confidence in your child's experience each day.

Be sure to look for your baby's "Cubby Note" each day. This small page usually contains useful but brief notes about your child's physical routines—mostly eating, sleeping, and diapering. Your child's teacher will most likely have additional information to share at the end of the day.

Communication with Treehouse Learning

Parents are respected as the expert for their infant, and our teachers rely on your continued conversation and information. As our teachers become familiar with your child's normal routines and behavior, they will be better able to report signs of discomfort or illness. Parents are always welcome to call during the day.

Please note that we may not administer any medication, including non-prescription ointments and medications, without a doctor's written authorization on approved forms. (Ask for a sample form.) Diaper ointments are an exception.

Regular updates on your child's feeding and sleeping schedules are appreciated, and conferences with our infant staff can be scheduled at any time. Conferences are also part of the transition process to our toddler program, which usually occurs between 15 and 18 months.

Parents are welcome to call in during the day and check in with our infant staff. Your frequent communication is an essential ingredient for your infant's initial transition. It also lays the foundation for your infant to feel comfortable and relaxed each day.

Our work at Treehouse Learning involves enormous responsibility on behalf of your child and family. Each teacher contributes love, care, and professional commitment to your child's growth and well being. Let us know how we can help!