

- Think about the **positive side of the change**, for example being able to have some time to yourself. For your child they will be meeting other children and have access to a wide range of activities which they may not be able to do at home.
- **Try and put on a brave face** for your child. Your child will feel happier leaving you if they can see that you are happy as they will not worry about you.
- **Practise leaving your child with a friend** so that when they go to nursery it is not the first time they have been without you
- When you get to nursery, you can try **settling your child** with their favourite nursery toy.
- **Always say “goodbye”**. They may be upset at first, but it will mean know you’re not going to disappear without warning.

If you would like further help in managing transitions, then speak to your GP or Health Visitor. You can also contact First Steps directly, who are here to help;

For more information, help, and advice, please contact:

First Steps
Early Intervention & Community Psychology Service

Hackney Ark
Downs Park Road
London E8 2FP
Tel: 020 7014 7135
Fax: 020 7014 7251

Further information is also available at:

<http://www.understandingchildhood.net/>
<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

If you have any issues or concerns please contact:

Patient Advice and Liaison Service
(PALS): 020 8510 7315/7728

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How to support your child to manage change

An information leaflet for parents



Incorporating hospital and community health services, teaching and research

This leaflet provides information based on our knowledge and experience of working with children and families.

All transitions can be difficult for families to negotiate, even positive transitions. They can be difficult because they involve change. It is normal for both children and parents to experience a degree of anxiety caused by change. Difficulties can also arise when children have had previous negative experiences of change as current transitions may remind your children of past changes.

Parents' own feelings about the transition will also influence how their child feels about it. For example, if parents' fears are shared with the child, the child will feel more nervous.

Children often don't use words to express how they're feeling and show how they are feeling through their behaviour. For example, being clingier than usual, disturbed sleep (e.g. difficulty settling, nightmares, early waking), temporary regression (e.g. wetting or wanting to be 'babied'), mild aggression (e.g. hitting or kicking more often than usual), mild hostility (e.g. coldness towards or ignoring of parent/siblings), being quieter than usual, having trouble concentrating, and/or complaining of tummy aches or headaches.

These feelings and reactions don't usually last very long and often resolve once the family has adjusted to the new situation. Like adults, children can also have mixed feelings about change. They may feel pleased about a new house, but sad about leaving the neighbourhood. They can also be scared of something unfamiliar.

General tips for supporting your child through times of change

- **Be aware of your own feelings** about the change. Talk them through with a friend/ partner.
- **Expect the transition to be successful** - if you are positive and confident it will help your child to be too. But remember that adjustments take time
- **Try to be extra available** to your child during the transition period.

- **Let your child express negative feelings.** Listen and take them seriously even if they sound minor to you.
- **Talk to your child about what is going to happen.** Try and find a story book which involves a similar change.
- If possible, **avoid too many changes at the same time.**
- **Think about previous changes that have gone well.** What did you do to prepare? What could you do again this time?
- **Remind your child of positive memories of changes.**

Tips for helping your child manage unexpected changes

- Do your best to **maintain a normal routine for your child** so that life feels predictable and safe. Keep things as familiar as possible.
- **Inform your child's teacher or other carers** about the change
- **Let your child express their feeling.** Listen, take them seriously, suggest coping strategies
- **Talk to your child** about what has happened and what life will be like now. If possible, look at photos (e.g. your old and new home)
- **Give your child extra time with you.** Play with them, praise them.
- Managing your child is likely to be harder if you are upset or angry about what has happened. In these situations you may need **someone to support you** with your feelings.

Tips for managing the transition to school/nursery

- **Visit your child's nursery/ school with them** before he or she starts. Practise the journey and talk about what school will be like.
- **Let your child know it is normal to feel nervous.** Share childhood memories of when you started somewhere new and it was ok.
- **Leave enough time** to get to school so that no-one feels rushed.