Podcast Introduction and Episode Overview

you Hi, welcome to season two of the Baby Manual podcast for parents of toddlers. This season will help you feel confident as you navigate the difficulties of toddlerhood, from tantrums to sleep schedules to potty training.

I'm your host, a pediatrician and mom, Dr. Carol Keim. Hello, my friends. Welcome to this week's episode of The Baby manual podcast. this is the ninth episode, of second season, all about preschool and daycare and how to choose day care and preschool.

And then also what to do when they come home sick all the time. We're just going to touch on that a little bit. So for daycares, day cares have a really wide range and aren't very well defined.

And it's really just sort of any sort situation where they are watching children during the day so that their parents can work. So some of these are regulated by health and safety organizations.

Some are not. some are formal, some or not, somewhere in home, summer in public places. They could be in a classroom. The ratio of teachers and children can vary the ages of the children, can really range.

It can be mixed ages or they could all be the same age. So you can take all of that into consideration when you're looking at daycares. But preschool here in the United States is a little bit different.

It actually is more like school and there are a couple of different settings for children.

Understanding Daycare and Preschool Options

And depending on their personality and their learning style, your child might do better at one type of school than another. So I'm going to go through our three main types of preschools that we have here.

In the U. S. and that would be Montessori, Waldorf and Reggio Emilia. Just what to take into consideration when you're looking at these types So Montessori schools, when you go into a Montesori school, I think a lot about things like rainbows and bright wooden toys and things that go in a logical progression.

So the furniture is all child size. They're teaching the children to really be self-sufficient. The teachers that are there are mostly there to observe and the children are the ones that kind of exploring things for themselves and teachers only step in when they need to.

They typically will have wooden shelves along the walls and kind these educational diagrams maybe some pictures about different shapes of leaves or like a poster about the human body or things like that, charts and stuff all around on the walls as well.

And as you go from left to right and top to bottom, which is the direction that we read, things get progressively more like they go in sequence and they make sense to go and sequence.

So they get maybe they build on one skill and get a little bit more difficult as they got towards the right, and then also towards bottom.

Montessori Schools

I think that's kind of a really cool intentional layout like The children during the day, they get to move around freely. So it's a relaxed atmosphere.

They pretty much do what they want to when they to be doing it, which can be really great for those self-directed

learners that want really explore whatever they're really interested in.

And then the adults are there to help out. they can give presentations and they really just intervene. teaching. They'll give these like short presentations.

A lot of times it'll just be to a small group of kids while other ones are doing other stuff somewhere else in the classroom. There will usually be children of different ages in this same classroom at a Montessori school and they're helping each other.

So that's kind of cool. The younger ones can look up to the older ones typically. The teachers at a Montessori school do have to be certified in Montissori.

And so that is important. It is a true certification. The types of children that tend to do really well in Monassori schools are those that you would think of as like free thinkers, those who are helpers, cooperative children, ones that love to help their siblings at home or help out in the house, or get things for themselves, get themselves dressed, and those kind of things.

Really creative, self-sufficient type children do well on Montassory environments. a Waldorf school. When I think of Waldorff, I'm thinking of relaxed and really natural.

They have their sort of keywords of simplicity, goodness, beauty, and wonder, which I really like. The layout of a Waldo classroom tends to be a lot more plain.

And so there's not a whole lot like distracting your eyes. It's less intense than a Montessori or Reggio Emilia school would be. So for children that are more sensitive to bright colors or that have sensory processing disorders or sensory needs, those would do better probably at a Waldorf classroom where it's a little bit calmer.

They'll typically have decorations that are things that you would find naturally outside in nature, so beautiful sticks and rocks and leaves and things like that.

And their toys are intentionally plain so that children can be really creative with them. So their dolls don't have faces painted on them, they're usually just wooden dolls shaped roughly in the shape of a human.

In the atmosphere, there's a lot of free play, a lots of exploration in nature. They do spend time outside. they learn how to do projects and handcrafts, which I really like.

And when they get up into elementary school, they do things that we think of as sort of lost arts, like knitting and, you know, fun things, making things with their hands.

A lot, lot that sort stuff that's actually useful. they have the classroom functioning a lot like a home. So it doesn't really feel like you're going to school.

It feels like your in a house where there might be a sink and a stove and children cooking in the class room and other children helping, you know, set up the table maybe so that they can eat lunch together or they're all, working together and functioning really smoothly together.

They do things like reading and writing and math later on in Waldorf schools than they do in other types of schools. Montessori and Reggio Emilia will typically teach children letters and numbers and have them write them out and maybe start sounding them.

Waldorf Schools

At Waldorf School they usually don't push that type of stuff. If children are interested they'll absolutely support them in that, but they're not doing it until the children show interest in it.

the teachers are accredited and they do have to have a master's degree or a certificate to teach at a Waldorf school. And what I think is really cool that's very different about Waldorff is that the teacher stays with the classroom.

So as the children get older, they stay with their teacher the whole time that they're at school, so when they go to like a kindergarten through fifth grade school they would have the same teacher for kindergarten, through 5th grade.

Yeah, you don't change every year like you do at other schools. And the children that do well at Waldorf schools, those are, I'd say, creative entrepreneur type of children, problem solvers, more self-directed learners as well, ones that want to deep dive into subjects, and those that have really imaginative thinking and really, you know, the creative types that like that.

They do really well that Waldorff schools. Reggio Emilia schools, these are, I think the keywords here is being really like child and play based and everything's really child centric at a Regio Emila school.

They have very colorful themes. they have these activity stations or theme stations. There might be say like a register with grocery station, you know, where children can play that or a workbench with hammer and nails or eight different types of stations like that set up around the school, all child-sized stuff in their classrooms.

They typically will be decorated with children's artwork. So, you know, unlike the Montessori, it feels more like they're kind of teaching or putting the information out there for the children to see.

At Reggio Emilia, like the child based, they don't give children coloring book pages to fill in. they give them blank pieces of paper to color and create things and then put up on the walls.

So they let the children really follow their interests and dive into those. And then they go kind of by topic. So, they'll have themes. They might do, say, dinosaurs and then do a lot of things around dinosaurs, like maybe have a dinosaur dig and draw pictures of it or paint pictures or maybe read books about dinosaurs.

You know, learn about them in all kinds of different ways throughout the week. The teachers are certified in early childhood education, but there is no actual Reggio Emilia specific certification.

So they do have to have their certification in Early Childhood Education, so they are still licensed for that, and the school gets licensed as well. So the atmosphere, you see a lot of play-based learning, a lotta children doing things that are really fun and learning through those activities, maybe doing science experiments together, making a piñata together.

Like doing these group activities where they do or build something. The teachers are playing with the children, so they're there to interact and to help and teach, but also really just to foster this fun environment of playing and the joy of learning though play.

They learn by theme. Like I had said, they do have some structured activities as well. So things like circle time and reading time, and lunchtime, that kind of stuff.

They do structure throughout the day, but they, yeah, their learning by them throughout day as. And then they have plenty of playtime and child directed time as So the children who do well at a Reggio Emilia school, these are children that like to follow their passion, that are creative thinkers, children, who are well-rounded, and who like, to learn in a lot of different ways.

And, you know, not just one type of way, but experience things in, a lotta different, ways and problem solvers as well.

Reggio Emilia Schools

So your child may fall into many of these categories. So I highly encourage you to look at different facilities, tour them before you make a decision on where to bring your children to school.

And then other things to take into consideration while you're looking. Look at the hours that they're open. Make sure that works with your schedule. The cost, of course, is another and the location.

Those are some really important things because preschool can get very expensive and can be very difficult if it's too far away. You know, if the ours don't line up with So those are all kind of the basic things that have to be there, right?

And then you can look at the ratio of children to teachers. Ideally, you want to have a lower ratio. So, the fewer number of child per teacher means the more attention that your child will get.

And I also find they're less likely to get sick. From my perspective, being in the office as a pediatrician, kids that go to centers that are really big centers with a lot of kids and not very many teachers, They're just not able to intervene before a child takes a cracker out of his mouth and sticks it in someone else's mouth kind of stuff happens.

Or they're playing together and they wipe their nose and their boogers are wiped on the toys. It's harder to see that stuff happening when there are fewer teachers per children in the classroom.

So if you have a lower ratio, that can be better. from a health care standpoint. The teaching style, you know, get a feel for the environment. See if you like how it is.

Also, check out the community there, too, because a lot of… You're gonna make a lotta friends at preschool. Your child's gonna meet a lotta parents, and you wanna make sure that you actually like the parents that are there and the children that're there.

So look at the communities as well. And then, yeah, definitely tour the school. You can ask all of these questions while you're here. Talk to the director or the teachers.

Make sure you and I think you'll be able to make a great decision after all of this. So for the illnesses at school, it's typical for children to get sick about four to six times in the first two to three years.

They say four-to-six times per year for two-three years is what we learned in medical school. That's how many times we see them. But what I actually hear from parents and then what i experienced myself is that really they get a bunch of mild colds in between and sometimes you'll really just see back-to-back runny nose for pretty much all of the winter or the fall in the Winter months when it's cold and they're all sharing their germs inside.

So you can see this clustering and them they do tend to spread between family members and so you might have a child bring a cold home and the parents get sick and and child gets sick again and parents again.

And you have this kind of ping pong effect and Typically, it's not the same thing that you're getting back. It might feel the Same, but there are different strains and also viruses mutate really fast.

So, It's probably a different subtype that's coming in, But it doesn't mean you are immune compromised. it Doesn't means there's anything wrong with your child that You have to worry about.

How to Choose a Preschool or Daycare

Its really common for them to get sick back to back However, that all said, you should only really have, they should really only be sick enough to see the doctor about four to six times.

And if it's more than that, or if you're ever worried, just call your pediatrician, get them checked out. They can always do some testing, you know, check them out, see if they're doing an examination, make sure they are okay.

There's a lot of ways to avoid germs at home. I actually have a whole chapter on this in my book, The Baby Manual, which will be linked in the show notes for this, but it is also available on Amazon and Kindle.

If you just look for The baby manual and CHIME, my last name, K-E-I-M, So if you wash your hands as soon as you get home, washing hands is one of the very best ways to get germs off.

And you just need regular soap. Germs will stick to soap, and so the soap then mechanically washes them away. You don't need antibacterial soap necessarily.

Antibacteria is also, you know, it kills them a little bit more, but it's not necessary. Regular soap and water has been shown to be actually equally or more effective than the antib?????ial.

The sanitizer doesn't really get your hands clean. It disinfects them. Like it kills the germs that are on them, but it doesn' get the dirt off. So I always suggest soap and water as soon as you get into the house.

Anytime you're about to eat and anytime you've used the bathroom, those are all times that you should be washing your hand. If anybody in the house is sick, ideally they should use their own hand towel or if everyone can have separate hand towels.

The handtowel in a bathroom is one of the most common places that germs spread at home. They've done studies on this and the germs, they just hang out on the towel and sometimes you brush your teeth and you wipe your mouth afterwards, you get some germs from your mouths on there.

Sometimes children, if they wash their hands, then they'll go in. wipe their nose with their hand and then dry their hands off. You get saliva and mucus onto the towels.

And then also even when you're touching the handles, the faucet handles with dirty hands to turn them on, right? And you clean your hands, you turn it off again, and you just touch that handle again and now you are putting those germs onto that towel.

So there are germs getting on there, so having separate towels can really help. You want to keep your toothbrushes apart in the house, ideally in separate cups, so not all in same cup because that's another way that you can spread germs.

Why Kids Get Sick at School

If somebody is sick, they should sleep in a room that is separate from other people, hopefully, if they can. Like if parents can sleep different rooms, one of the parents is less likely to spread it to the other one.

When you're that close to somebody and just breathing, you know, for that many hours next to someone, it can really spread your germs if you are ill. Try not to share utensils or food.

And one thing that we don't often think about is like if you blow on your child's food to cool it down, or you touch it with your lips or your tongue to make sure it's not too hot, those are also putting germs into that food, so that's another way you can spread it.

Or you could be getting their germs that are on their spoon. Then if anyone is sick in the house, they should stay away from anybody that is at high risk.

So that means children under a year, and especially those less than six months, They should not be in the same room as them, and they should be kissing them on the face, they shouldn't be touching them.

They really should try to stay at least six feet away. If they could wear a mask if they're coughing, then that can really help to keep that cough contained so that it doesn't go as far around the house and get onto all the surfaces in house.

if there's anybody with any medical conditions at home, those are also considered high-risk individuals and should isolate from the rest of the family.

So just a couple of quick things to boost your immunity. And then in the next podcast that comes out, we're going to talk all about supportive care for respiratory infections and all these viral illnesses that are going around right now.

In all the things you can do at home, they're not medications to feel better, but so to.

Preventing Germ Spread at Home

We've got some vitamins. So we usually start off with vitamin C and D. Those are both immune boosting and anti-inflammatory, and they also are antioxidants.

So they help repair the damage that viruses and bacteria do in your body. Zinc is antiviral. It kills viruses on contact, so taking zinc can help. And elderberry is also immune-boosting and ant viral.

You should also be having at least five to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. And if not, maybe supplementing to try to get all of those fruits, and veggies in.

Drink lots and lots of fluids. You want to drink water, soup or broth. tea with honey, lemon, and ginger. Just remember no honey for babies less than a year because of the risk of botulism.

Make sure you're getting plenty of rest. At least eight to 10 hours of sleep at night is ideal when you are sick. And you want to try to limit sugar and dairy while you were sick because those can kind of feed the infections and make them get a little bit worse.

I do have a link on my Linktree to vitamins and supplements that you can get at a little bit of a discount if you order them through that site. And I get a commission if I order that, so I like to be upfront about that.

But I have some protocols there, too, for fighting different respiratory infections that have these handful of vitamins all in one place.

Supporting Recovery and Closing Remarks

It's nice and easy, if ya like. So I hope this was helpful. I have you guys stay really healthy after your kids do go to preschool I Hope you find the perfect preschool or daycare for your child and have a wonderful day I look forward to seeing you again in two weeks when we talk all about supportive care for respiratory infections And have wonderful days Thank you for listening to the Baby Manual Podcast.

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