

# SICK CHILDREN POLICY

Children come into contact with many other children and adults in the early childhood environment, increasing their exposure to others who may be sick or carrying an infectious illness. The National Quality Standard requires early childhood education and care services to implement specific strategies to minimise the spread of infectious illness and maintain a healthy environment for all children, educators and families

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication

## PURPOSE

We aim to maintain the health and wellbeing of all children, staff, and their families, ensuring a healthy environment and minimising cross contamination and the spread of infectious illnesses.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service has adopted the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) publication recommendations developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council to guide our practices to help limit the spread of illness and disease. We aim to provide families with up to date information regarding specific illnesses and ways to minimise the spread of infection within the Service and at home.

We are guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the Australian Government- Department of Health and local public health units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act.

### Minimizing the spread of infections and diseases in early education and care services

To protect the health of children and staff within the Service, it is important that children and staff who are ill are kept away from the Service for the recommended period.

*At times, an outbreak of a new or 'novel' virus or infection, may require exclusion from the Service that is not specified in general exclusion periods for common infectious illnesses. Information, education and recommendations regarding any 'novel' virus will be provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and/or local public health unit. (see Excluding Children from the Service section)*

*The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded depends on:*

- *how easily the infection can spread*
- *how long the person is likely to be infectious and*
- *the severity of the infectious disease or illness.*

Our Educators and staff are not able to diagnose whether or not a child has an infectious illness. However, if an infectious illness is suspected, we may ask the family to collect their child from care as soon as possible or not bring the child to preschool. Management and Educators *may* request families seek medical advice.

### Children arriving at the service who are unwell

Management are unable to accept the attendance of a child if they:

- have a contagious illness or infectious disease
- have a temperature of 38°C or above
- are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention
- have had a temperature in the last 24 hours (or has been given medication for a temperature prior to arriving at the Service- for example: Panadol) *unless they have received a doctor's clearance letter stating that the child is cleared of any infection and is able to return to preschool.*
- have had diarrhoea or gastro in the last 24 hours (48 hours when there is an outbreak of gastroenteritis). An outbreak is when two or more children or staff have a sudden onset of diarrhoea/vomiting in a 2-day period. (NSW Gov.- Health 2019)
- have started a course of antibiotics in the last 24 hours, *unless they have received a doctor's clearance letter stating that the child is cleared of any infection and is able to return to preschool.*

## Children who become ill at the service

Children may become unwell throughout the day, in which case Management and Educators will respond to children's individual symptoms of illness and provide immediate comfort and care.

- Educators will closely monitor and document the child's symptoms in the room diary and then Illness Register
- Children who are unwell at the Service will be able to rest in a supervised area away from other children until parents or the emergency contact person is able to collect them
- Educators will take the child's temperature. If the child's temperature is 38°C or higher, management will contact the child's parents/guardian/emergency contacts as soon as possible to have the child collected. (The child is then excluded from preschool for 24 hours after the last elevated temperature)
- Educators will monitor the child closely and be alerted to vomiting, runny stools, coughing or convulsions
- Educators will check that written parental permission to administer paracetamol has been provided during enrolment and filed in the child's individual record
- Educators will check the medical history of the child to ensure there are no allergies before administering Panadol
- Accurate records will be kept of the child's temperature, time taken, medication administered, dosage, staff member's full name and name of staff member who witnessed the administration of medication (if relevant)
- Educators will record illnesses in the Illness Register
- Educators will move the child to a quiet area where they can rest whilst being supervised. The lounge in each room is usually utilised and will be covered with a sheet which will be washed
- Educators will complete the *Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Form* and ensure that it is signed by the parent/guardian/emergency contact
- These forms will be filed in the Illness Folder/Register in the office
- Educators will thoroughly clean resources or equipment that may be contaminated by a sick child.

## Common colds and flu

The common cold or flu (viral upper respiratory tract infections) are very common in children occurring 6-10 times a year on average with the highest number usually being during the first 2 years in preschool or school. Symptoms may include coughing, runny nose and a slight temperature.

Children who are generally healthy, will recover from a common cold in a few days. Keeping a child home and away from preschool helps to prevent the spread of germs.

## Reporting outbreaks to the public health unit

Management is required to notify the local [Public Health Unit](#) (PHU) by phone (call 1300 066 055) as soon as possible after they are made aware that a child enrolled at the Service is suffering from

one of the following vaccine preventable diseases, any confirmed case of COVID-19 or outbreak of gastroenteritis.

- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Haemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ('German measles')
- Measles
- Pertussis ('whooping cough')
- Tetanus
- An outbreak of 2 or more people with gastrointestinal

Management will closely monitor health alerts and guidelines from Public Health Units and the Australian Government- Department of Health for any advice and emergency health management in the event of a contagious illness outbreak such as coronavirus- COVID-19.

### Excluding children from the service

When a child has been diagnosed with an illness or infectious disease, the Service will refer to information about recommended exclusion periods from the **Public Health Unit** (PHU) and *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.

The [Recommended exclusion periods- Poster 'Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services'](#) will also be utilised. This is on display in our centre and is emailed to families with policies on enrolment.

- When an infectious disease has been diagnosed, the Service will display appropriate documentation and alerts for families including information on the illness/disease, symptoms, infectious period and the exclusion period. (This information can be obtained from *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care and Public Health Unit, or Department of Health*).
- If a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the Service, children who have not been fully immunised will be excluded from care.
- Management will check all children's Immunisation records and alert parents as required.
- Children that have had diarrhoea and vomiting will be asked to stay away from the Service for 24 hours after symptoms have ceased to reduce infection (48 hours when there is an outbreak in the local area).

### MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- effective hygiene policies and procedures are adhered to at all times to prevent the spread of illnesses
- they promote effective hand hygiene and cough etiquette

- effective environmental cleaning policies and procedures are adhered to all times
- that any child who registers a temperature of 38°C or above is collected from the Service and excluded for 24 hours after the last elevated temperature
- a child who has not been immunised will be excluded from the Service if a vaccine preventable disease is reported within the Service community and that child is deemed to be in danger of contracting the illness. Please refer to our *Control of Infectious Diseases Policy*.
- families of a child with complex and chronic medical conditions, such a serious autoimmune disease, will be notified in the event of an outbreak of an illness or infectious disease that could compromise their health
- families are notified to collect their child if they have vomited or had diarrhoea whilst at the Service.

#### THE APPROVED PROVIDER WILL ENSURE

- notification is made to the Regulatory Authorities within 24 hours of any incident involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child while being educated and cared for by an Education and Care Service, which:
  - (i) a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner or
  - (ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital. For example: whooping cough, broken limb and anaphylaxis reaction

#### PARENT/FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

In order to prevent the spread of disease, families are required to monitor their child's health and not allow them to attend preschool if they have an infectious illness or are display symptoms of an illness.

Signs of illness in young children may include:

- runny, green nasal discharge
- high temperature
- diarrhoea
- red, swollen or discharging eyes (bacterial conjunctivitis)
- vomiting
- rashes (red/purple)
- irritability, unusually tired or lethargic
- drowsiness
- poor circulation
- a stiff neck or sensitivity to light
- pain
- mouth sores that cause drooling
- impetigo

Parents should seek medical attention should their child (or other family members) develop symptoms such as: high fever and uncontrolled coughing or breathing difficulties

Families are required to keep up to date with their child's immunisation, providing a copy of the updated AIR Immunisation History Statement to the Service following each immunisation on the National Immunisation Schedule.

#### SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. (2009).

Australian Government- Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/>

Australian Government Department of Health Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC)

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012) (updated June 2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.

NSW Public Health Unit: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/pages/phus.aspx>

*Public Health Act 2010*

Raising Children Network: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/fever>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

The Sydney Children's Hospitals network (2020).

<https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/search/site?query=fever>

Safe Work Australia

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