

BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH!

Preventing the Spread of Influenza (the flu) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff



Symptoms

Symptoms of flu include fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea also can occur, but are much more common among children than adults.

Spread of the Flu

The main way that flu is spread is from person to person through coughs, sneezes and lack of handwashing. This can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person travel through the air and reach the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes flu can spread when a person touches droplets, nose drainage or saliva from an infected person, or a soiled object, and then touches one's own (or someone else's) nose or mouth before washing hands.

Preventing Spread of the Flu in Child Care Settings

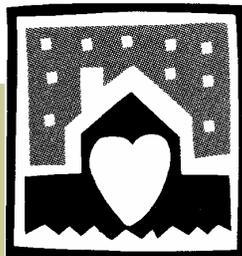
Vaccination against the flu each Fall remains the primary way to prevent this disease. Vaccination, along with other measures, also may help to decrease the spread of influenza among children in the child care setting and among care providers.

Encourage influenza vaccination for children and care providers in child care settings.

Influenza vaccine is recommended for all children 6-23 months of age, care providers of children 0-23 months of age in the child care setting, and persons >2 years of age who have high-risk medical conditions for influenza-related complications.

Remind children and care providers to wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand rubs, and make sure that supplies are available.

- Encourage care providers and children to use soap and water to wash hands when they are visibly soiled, or an alcohol-based hand rub when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly soiled.



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Caring for the Community
Since the 1930's

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contacts with infants and children, such as before meals or feedings, after wiping the child's nose or mouth, after touching objects such as tissues or surfaces soiled with saliva or nose drainage, after diaper changes, and after assisting a child with toileting.

- Encourage care providers to wash the hands of infants and toddlers when their hands become soiled.
- Encourage children to wash hands when their hands have become soiled. Teach children to wash hands for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Oversee the use of alcohol-based hand rubs by children and avoid using these on the sensitive skin of infants and toddlers.
 - Rub hands thoroughly until the alcohol has dried, when using alcohol-based hand rubs.
 - Keep alcohol-based hand rubs out of the reach of children to prevent unsupervised use.
- Ensure that sink locations and restrooms are stocked with soap, paper towels or working hand dryers.
- Ensure that each child care room and diaper changing area is supplied with alcohol-based hand rub when sinks for washing hands are not readily accessible. Alcohol-based hand rubs are not recommended when hands are visibly soiled.

Keep the child care environment clean and make sure that supplies are available.

- Clean frequently touched surfaces, toys, and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled.
- Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, and EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Always follow label instructions when using an EPA-registered disinfectant. If EPA-registered chlorine bleach is not available and a generic (i.e., store brand) chlorine bleach is used, mix 1/4 cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water.
- Keep disinfectants out of the reach of children.

Remind children and care providers to cover their noses and mouths when sneezing or coughing.

- Advise children and care providers to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and to put their used tissue in a waste basket.
- Make sure that tissues are available in all nurseries, child care rooms, and common areas such as reading rooms, classrooms, and rooms where meals are provided.
- Encourage care providers and children to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub as soon as possible, if they have sneezed or coughed on their hands.

Observe all children for symptoms of respiratory illness, especially when there is increased influenza in the community.

- Observe closely, all infants and children for symptoms of respiratory illness. Notify the parent if a child develops a fever (100° F. or higher under the arm, 101° F. orally, or 102°F. rectally) and chills, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches. Send the child home, if possible, and advise the parent to contact the child's doctor.

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Encourage parents of sick children to keep their children home. Encourage sick care providers to stay home.

- Encourage parents of sick children to keep their child home and away from the child care setting until the child has been without fever for 24 hours, to prevent spreading illness to others. Similarly, encourage sick care providers to stay home.

Consult your local health department when increases in respiratory illness occur in the child care setting.

- Consult with your local or state health department for recommendations to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.