

Introduction

The nature of interactions within an early childhood education and care centre means that illnesses can quickly spread. Exclusion and implementing effective hygiene practices reduce the risk of infection and the transmission of illness.

Parent / guardian responsibilities

- Follow health and hygiene procedural posters displayed throughout centre.
- Upon and throughout enrolment, provide evidence of child's immunisation status.
- When requested, collect child as soon as possible if they become ill at the centre.
- Do not bring child to the centre if ill and inform the centre if child is ill.
- If requested, provide a medical clearance upon their child's return to the centre.

General educator responsibilities

- Inform parents / guardians of this procedure upon and throughout enrolment.
- Prominently display the current *Queensland Department of Health Time Out Poster*.
- Consistently implement health and hygiene procedures, and recommendations outlined in *Staying Healthy and preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th Ed)*.

Exclusion periods

- Refer to *Queensland Department of Health Time Out Poster* for recommended exclusion periods.
- If illness signs (e.g. rash, fever or vomiting) indicate a child may be contagious and / or a child is too ill to participate in the centre program, it is at the discretion of the centre Director (or delegate) to direct the parent / guardian to collect their child.
- The decision to exclude a child is based on the health and wellbeing of the child and other children attending the centre and *Staying Healthy and preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th Ed)* guidelines. As per the *National Health and Medical Research Council (2013)*, services will not be influenced by doctor's letters stating that a child can return to a centre, unless the child's condition fulfils the centre's criteria for returning to care.
- The length of time of exclusion depends on:
 - The nature of the illness.
 - How easily it can spread.
 - How long someone is likely to be infectious.
 - How well the infected child / adult can perform effective hygiene practices.
 - The severity of the illness.

Possible conflict and challenges arising regarding exclusion

- Challenges may arise when negotiating with families and interpreting medical clearance certificates, due to families:
 - Finding exclusion requirements difficult because of pressures to meet working and personal commitments.
 - Presenting medical clearance certificates for a child, that educators consider inconsistent with the current situation.
- If a difficult situation arises, contact your Children's Services Manager / Committee and / or the local *Public Health Unit* for direction.

An outbreak of an infectious illness

- Refer to *Staying Healthy and preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th Ed)* to determine if an 'outbreak' has occurred.
- Notify your Children's Services Manager / Committee and the local Public Health Unit.
- Follow Public Health Unit direction. This may include distributing communication to families and / or implementing additional hygiene practices.
- An incident notification must be completed. Refer to *Procedure Child incident reporting*.
- Complete *Form Infectious illness register* and undertake a review of centre hygiene practices *Form Service Hygiene Audit*.

A child becomes ill when attending a centre

Educator responsibilities

- Monitor and comfort the child. When practical and possible, separate the child from other children.
- If the child has a known medical condition, refer to the child's medical management plan.
- Record illness signs and actions taken via *Form Incident Record*.
- If required, call Triple 0. An educator may accompany a child in an ambulance if regulatory educator to child ratios can be maintained at the centre.
- Provide parent / guardian (or emergency contact) with the *Form Incident record*. Ask them to review and sign. When requested, provide a copy to the parent / guardian and / or ambulance officer.

Centre director (or delegate) responsibilities

- Notify parent / guardian (or emergency contact). Advise them to collect their child immediately.
- Review and sign *Form Incident record* and record details of illness on *Form Infectious illness register*.
- Inform families, when the illness has been **confirmed** as infectious by a doctor. A range of communication methods should be used to ensure all families are notified as quickly as possible. Any communication must maintain the anonymity of the ill child / adult. At a minimum, display a sign stating- "*Child with infectious illness at this centre (with illness name)*".
- Depending on the illness, direct the parent / guardian to provide a medical clearance certificate upon their return to the centre.

Confirmed case of a vaccine preventable illness

- Advise *Public Health* if there are non-immunised children enrolled. The *Public Health* will determine if or how long children should be excluded from the centre.
- Record details of illness on *Form Infectious illness register*.
- Inform families, when the illness has been **confirmed** as infectious by a doctor by distributing information supplied by the Public Health Unit. A range of communication methods must be used to ensure all families are notified as quickly as possible. Any communication must maintain the anonymity of the ill child / adult. At a minimum, display a sign stating "*Child with infectious illness at this service (with illness name)*".
- An incident notification must be completed. Refer to *Procedure Child incident reporting*.

NQS2 Children's health and safety Procedure

Exclusion due to illness

- Complete *Form Infectious illness register* and undertake a review of centre hygiene practices (*Form Hygiene Audit*).
- A non-immunised child (ren) is not allowed to attend the service until the local Public Health Unit has advised it is safe to do so and a medical clearance has been supplied.

Acknowledgements and references

- National Health and Medical Research Council (2013). *Staying healthy Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services. Fifth edition.* [ONLINE] Available at: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services> [Accessed December 2018].
- National Health and Medical Research Council (2013). *Information for families. Exclusion Periods explained.* <https://nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/clinical%20guidelines/ch55b-exclusion-period-info-sheet.pdf> [Accessed December 2018].