



INFORMATION ON PREVENTING INFECTIOUS ILLNESSES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES AND PARENTS/WHANAU

HOW IS AN ILLNESS CAUSED?

Many illnesses are caused by micro-organisms or 'germs' such as bacteria (e.g. *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*), viruses (e.g. Rotavirus, Norovirus) and protozoa (e.g. *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*). These germs can be found in body fluids or wastes of infected humans and animals (e.g. saliva/spit, faeces/poo, blood, vomit, urine, mucous, infected wounds, etc). They are too small to be seen with the naked eye and many can survive in the air, in food and water and on surfaces and objects for some time.

HOW IS AN ILLNESS SPREAD?

Germs can be spread by:

- Close contact with a person who is infected (note: this person may not always be unwell themselves or may be infectious before they start to show symptoms)
- Close contact with an infected animal
- Consumption of contaminated food or drinking water
- Contact with contaminated objects/surfaces (e.g. door handles, toys)

Germs usually enter the human body by:

- Breathing in tiny airborne droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Placing dirty hands to the mouth (e.g. touching a contaminated surface or an infected animal and then eating without washing hands first)
- Eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- Direct or indirect contact with saliva (e.g. drinking out of the same cup, kissing, sucking and sharing of toys)
- Direct or indirect contact of infected body fluids with skin or mucous membranes (e.g. splashes into eyes, nose, mouth)

WHAT IS INFECTION CONTROL?

Infection control is steps aimed to limit the spread of infectious illnesses that are transferred directly or indirectly to people. There are four main steps involved:

1. Effective hand washing and drying
2. Effective environmental cleaning and disinfection
3. Keeping food and drinking water safe and free from contamination
4. Exclusion of ill children and staff

Staff, parents and children must take all possible steps to stop the spread of illness from one person to another.

Washing and Drying Hands

Every one should wash their hands:

- After going to toilet
- Before handling and/or eating any food
- After changing nappies
- After contact with dirty surfaces
- After blowing your nose
- After sneezing/coughing into hands
- After playing outside
- After arts and crafts
- After contact with pets or other animals

Children, staff and parents should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap, warm water and, preferably, use a nailbrush. Hands should be dried thoroughly for 20 seconds with a throw-away paper towel.

Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

Regular cleaning should be undertaken of the following areas/items:

- Sanitary fixtures (toilets, basins, etc)
- Utensils and tableware
- Door handles, hand contact surfaces
- Tables and chairs
- Play equipment and toys
- Bedding/ linen/clothing
- Waste disposal bins

Disinfect areas (e.g. toilets, nappy change tables, nappy bins) where faeces/urine and saliva/spit are most likely to be found and any areas where blood or vomit has been spilt.

Keep Food and Water Safe

Good food hygiene practices must be implemented, including:

- Do not share foods or drinks
- Do not share eating or drinking utensils, i.e. forks and spoons, cups
- Wash all raw, ready-to-eat foods
- Store perishable foods below 4°C
- Store hot foods at over 60°C
- Protect food from insects and flies
- Remember the 3 C's: Clean, Cook, Chill
- Prepare formula and breast-milk carefully
- Throw-out all left-overs

Food handlers **must not** prepare or handle foods if unwell themselves.

Exclusion of Ill Children and Staff

Unwell children and adults should stay away from:

- Early childhood education services
- Schools
- Hospitals and rest-homes
- Swimming pools

If someone had diarrhoea and/or vomiting, then they must stay away from the above places until they are well and have had no symptoms for **48 hours** (that means the person has had two days of normal bowel motions and no vomiting).

IF A CHILD BECOMES ILL:

- Parents/guardians/whanau **must** tell the staff at the early childhood education service if their child is sick, no matter how mild they may think the illness is. Staff may ask for the child to stay away from the centre until he/she is well again and there are no chances that the child may pass their illness onto others. This will depend on:
 - the seriousness of their illness and the cause (if known)
 - the child's symptoms

- medical advice
- the centre's infectious disease policies and procedures
- Children with diarrhoea or vomiting should **never** remain at the childcare centre. They need to be collected without delay by the parent/caregiver/whanau. They must remain away from the centre until they are well and have been free from symptoms for **48 hours**.
- While a sick child is waiting for their parents/ caregiver/whanau to collect them from the centre, they should be kept away from other children and staff in a designated isolation area. They should be made comfortable and be supervised by a staff member at all times until collected.
- In general, children should be seen by a doctor and not attend childcare if they are ill and have symptoms of concern such as:
 - have no interest in activities or play
 - have little energy and/or want to sleep often
 - cry easily, are irritable or in pain
 - constantly want to be held and comforted
 - experience vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, and/or skin rash
- If the child has been medically diagnosed with an infectious disease, they must stay away from the centre until symptom-free for a specified period (in accordance with Ministry of Health Infectious Diseases Guidelines or medical advice). This will ensure they are not infectious to others when they return. The time a child will need to stay away will vary depending on the disease/infection involved. Your doctor or Public Health staff will be able to provide direction on this.
- Early childhood education service staff must also follow the same guidelines above if unwell.

REQUIRE FURTHER INFORMATION?

For any queries, assistance and advice, please contact a Health Protection Officer or Public Health Nurse at either:

The Public Health Centre
Wanganui Hospital
Heads Road
Private Bag 3003
WANGANUI
Telephone: (06) 348 1775

The Public Health Unit
Palmerston North Hospital
Heretaunga Street
Private Bag 11036
PALMERSTON NORTH
Telephone: (06) 350 9110

Other relevant Public Health Service information available to ECE Services include:

- Ministry of Health *Infectious Diseases* A4 card (Code HE 1215)
- Disease Outbreaks in Early Childhood Education Services
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Services
- Washing Sick or Soiled Children in Early Childhood Education Services
- Water Temperatures for Early Childhood Education Services
- Lead-Based Paints for Early Childhood Education Services
- Dishwashing for Early Childhood Education Services
- Fact Sheets on Specific Diseases (Various)