

Illness Policy

When groups of children play and learn together, illness and disease can spread from one child to another even when implementing the recommended hygiene and infection control practices. The Centre is committed to preventing the spread of infectious illnesses through the implementation, monitoring and maintaining of simple strategies such as, hand washing, effective cleaning procedures, and an understanding and knowledge of children's health.

Linked to National Quality Standards- Quality Area Two: Element 2.1.3 / 2.1.4

Policy Statement

Educators at Tanah Merah Childcare Centre have a duty of care to ensure that all children, educators, families, management, volunteers and visitors are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of the service's operation.

Protection can include:

- * Notifying children, families and educators when a diagnosed infectious illness is present at the centre;
- * Ensuring educators have adequate equipment or products, such as disposable gloves, detergents and soaps;
- * Maintaining hygienic procedures, such as correct handling of body fluids;
- * Increasing educators awareness and knowledge of cross infection; and
- * Maintaining a hygienic and healthy environment, such as cleaning the centre daily and ensuring the centre is well ventilated.

The purpose of this policy is to guide employee's to manage illness and prevent the spread of infectious illness.

The policy will assist the educators to:

- * Meet the children's needs when they are unwell;
- * Identify symptoms of illness;
- * Monitor and document the progress of an illness;
- * Guide educators actions when symptoms change;
- * Notify families or emergency contact when a symptom of an infectious illness, disease or medical condition has been observed; and
- * Notify stakeholders when a doctor has confirmed an infectious illness.

The centre prevents the spread of illnesses by implementing the following strategies:

- * Educators are to maintain a high standard of hygiene to minimise the spread of infections.
- * Educators are to read and be familiar with the resource folder "***Staying Healthy in Child Care" 4th Edition***

A person who clearly shows no signs of illness themselves can spread infections. Hand washing is the most effective way of preventing this. Hand washing is effective because it loosens, dilutes and flushes off germs. Hand drying is also vitally important.

The centre encourages hand washing by providing:

- * Readily available hand basins for educators and children;
- * Soap dispensers with foaming soap which generates a richer lather with little water.

The centre encourages educators, children and families to wash their hands with soap (from dispenser or pump pack) and water:

- * Before and after handling food;
- * Upon arrival and departure from the centre;
- * After toileting children and self;
- * After smoking;
- * After personal grooming (brushing hair);

- * After blowing nose, either a child's or your own;
- * After working with chemicals;
- * Before and after treating First Aid incidents.

NB – Nappy wipes may be used while outdoors as a method of cleaning hands.

Identifying Signs and Symptoms of Illness

It is important to remember that educators are not health care professionals and are unable to diagnose an illness. To ensure that symptoms are not infectious and minimise the spread of an infection, medical advice should always be sought.

Symptoms of an illness can occur in isolation or in conjunction with others. Educators are to be aware of the following symptoms which may indicate a possible infection or serious medical illness or condition.

Symptoms indicating an illness may include:

- * Behaviour that is unusual for the individual child, such as a child who is normally active and who suddenly becomes lethargic or drowsy;
- * High temperature or fever;
- * Loose bowels;
- * Faeces which is grey, pale or contains blood;
- * Vomiting;
- * Discharge from the eye or ear;
- * Skin that displays rashes, blisters, spots, crusty or weeping sores;
- * Loss of appetite;
- * Dark urine;
- * Headaches;
- * Stiff neck or other muscular and joint pain;
- * Continuous scratching of scalp or skin;
- * Difficulty in swallowing or complaining of a sore throat;
- * Persistent, prolonged or severe coughing; or
- * Difficulty in breathing.

Staying Healthy in Child Care, 2005, p. 18

High Temperatures or Fevers

A high temperature is a symptom that can be observed in children and is generally considered to be a mechanism that indicates the body is experiencing an infection. Recognised authorities define a child's normal temperature within a range between 36.5 and 37.5 degrees Celsius and this depends on the age of the child and the time of day.

Children can also experience an elevated temperature for other reasons, which may not indicate an infection. Children may have a higher temperature than normal when they:

- * Experience discomfort or irritation. Eg when they are teething or after immunisation;
- * Are sleeping; or
- * Have been participating in physical activity or exercise.

Methods to Reduce a Child's Fever

- * Encourage the child to drink plenty of water unless there are reasons why the child is only allowed limited fluids;
- * Remove excessive clothing (cultural beliefs may need to be acknowledged) and
- * Sponge lukewarm water on the child's forehead, back of neck and exposed areas of skin, such as arms and legs.

When a Fever Requires Medical Attention

There are several indicators or factors that define when a fever requires immediate medical attention. These are when the child:

- * Has an earache;
- * Has difficulty swallowing;
- * Is breathing rapidly;
- * Has a rash;
- * Is vomiting;
- * Has a stiff neck; or
- * Is very sleepy or drowsy.

The Children's Hospital at Westmead, 2005

Caring for a Child who is Unwell

Excluding sick children and employee's is one of the three most important ways of limiting the spread of infection in child care centre. Often children are unwell with the common cold (coughing, runny nose and a slight temperature) but do not display symptoms of an infectious illness that requires exclusion. Although the exclusion of a child may place added pressure on parents and families with work commitments, educators must ensure the Health and Safety of all other families utilising the service and therefore the need for exclusion from the centre is at the Director's discretion.

In the event of a child being unwell, educators are to ensure the child:

- * Has a quiet place to rest away from the rest of the group when required;
- * Is encouraged to wash hands after blowing his/her nose to prevent the spread of germs;
- * Is encouraged to cover their mouth when coughing and to wash their hands afterwards; and
- * Is monitored for signs of symptoms deteriorating.

Monitoring the Symptoms of an Illness

It is important to remember that educators can interpret the severity of the same symptom differently. Multiple people observing symptoms independently of each other may not accurately reflect when changes become more severe and therefore, an illness may become more serious without notice. For this reason, educators are to nominate one person to care for an ill child, who can record any changes in breathing, colour of skin, levels of consciousness or change in temperature.

Documenting Symptoms of an Illness

Documenting symptoms is crucial to the success of monitoring an illness, especially when the conditions change and the child becomes increasingly unwell. Records are an important way of communicating to a family how their child's illness has developed or been managed by educators. Paramedics, medical practitioners and hospitals may use the information collected from educators to diagnose an illness. For example, by documenting a child's temperature every 15 minutes, assists educators to determine how quickly the temperature is rising and the possible severity of the illness. Educators are to record the symptoms of an illness in a clear, objective and readable text, which indicates details about:

- * The name of the child being monitored;
- * Who is recording the information;
- * How frequently the information is recorded;
- * The date and time;
- * Whether medication has been administered;
- * First Aid and care giving strategies implemented: and
- * If adverse reactions are observed.

Illness Report

Child's Name: _____ Room: _____

Date: _____ Educator: _____

Nature of child's illness: _____

Symptoms of illness: (please circle)

Temperature Vomiting Diarrhoea Lethargy Other

First Aid or Care Giving Strategies Implemented:

Any Adverse reactions Observed:

Parent's Informed:

Observations Taken:

Time	Temperature	Vomiting	Diarrhoea	Lethargy	Other

Educator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Director's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Exclusion Guidelines for an Infectious Illness

- * Please refer to the Centre's Immunisation Policy

Notifying Families or Emergency Contacts when an Illness is Present

In the event of a child displaying symptoms of an illness requiring exclusion educators are to:

- * Notify the Director. If the Director is unavailable the next most senior educator is to be notified ie. Assistant Director. The Director will determine the need to contact families or emergency contacts.
- * Children and employee's are to be excluded from the centre as per the exclusion policy.
- * Informing other families and stakeholders of an infectious disease is only to be done so after a formal diagnosis from a Doctor is received.

In the event of not being able to contact a parent or emergency contact, educators are to follow steps outlined in *Caring for a Child who is Unwell, Monitoring the Symptoms of an Illness* and *Documenting Symptoms of an Illness*.

Communication with Stakeholders

Educators, Children and Families

The centre encourages educators and families to wash their hands with soap (from dispenser or pump pack) and water:

- * Before and after handling food;
- * Upon arrival and departure from the centre;
- * After toileting children and self;
- * After smoking;
- * After personal grooming (brushing hair);
- * After blowing nose, either a child's or your own;
- * After working with chemicals;
- * Before and after treating First Aid incidents.

The centre will teach and encourage children to wash their hands using the following method:

- * Wet hands;
- * Using foaming soap and spread over hands;
- * Rub hands vigorously as they wash, paying attention to palms, backs of hands, in between fingers and under fingernails;
- * Rinse hands thoroughly to remove all suds and germs;
- * Pat dry hands with paper towel and turn off the tap with the paper towel.

Management

- * Management will ensure that all employees receive training and information pertaining to the identification of illness and providing care for unwell children.
- * In the event of educators being absent due to Infectious illness, the centre will utilise the use of agency employees if necessary.
- * Management will ensure that all other stakeholders, including families, other educators and Departmental bodies, are adequately informed of an infectious illness in a timely manner.

Experiences

Excursions

- * The centre will ensure that adequate hand washing facilities are available for use while children are on excursion.
- * Should a child display symptoms of illness while on excursion educators will refer to *Caring for a Child who is Unwell, Monitoring the Symptoms of an Illness* and *Documenting Symptoms of an Illness*. The centre is to be contacted, and parents notified immediately if child's symptoms deteriorate or there is reason to believe the child is infectious.

Links to Other Policies

- * Child Protection
- * Employment of Child Care Professionals
- * Enrolment of New Children
- * First Aid
- * Hygiene and Infection Control
- * Immunisation and Health Related Exclusion
- * Medication
- * Occupational Health and Safety
- * Privacy and Confidentiality
- * Educators as Role Models
- * Supporting Children's Individual Needs

Sources

- * National Health and Medical Research Council. (2005). Staying Healthy in Child Care: Preventing infectious disease in child care (4th Ed.).
- * The Children's Hospital at Westmead.(2005). Fever. Retrieved November 25 2007 from <http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/factsheets/feverj.htm>

Useful Websites

- * Anaphylaxis Australia - www.allergyfacts.org.au/foodalerts.asp
- * Asthma Foundations Australia - www.asthmaaustralia.org.au
- * Centre for Community Child Health - www.rch.org.au
- * Health Institute - www.healthinsite.gov.au
- * Immunise Australia Program - www.immunise.health.gov.au
- * National Health and Medical Research Council - www.nhmrc.gov.au
- * NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service - www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au
- * Raising Children Network - www.raisingchildren.net.au

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