

Infectious Diseases

The spread of infections in the early childhood environment is facilitated by microbial contamination of the environment, as well as the greater exposure to young children who are still developing hygienic behaviours and habits. Our Service will minimise children’s exposure to infectious diseases by adhering to all recommended guidelines from relevant government authorities regarding the prevention of infectious diseases, promoting practices that reduce the transmission of infection, ensuring the exclusion of sick children and educators, supporting child immunisation, and implementing effective hygiene practices.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and state Ministry of Health about infectious diseases as required. Recommendations from the Health Department will be strictly adhered to at all times.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
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.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases

90	Medical conditions policy
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
93	Administration of medication

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of Medication Policy Family Communication Policy Hand Washing Policy Health and Safety Policy Immunisation Policy Incident, Illness, Accident & Trauma Policy Coronavirus (COVID-19) Management Policy	Medical Conditions Policy Nappy Change & Toileting Policy Physical Environment Policy Sleeping & Rest Requirement Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Children encounter many other children and adults within the Service environment which can result in the contraction of infectious illnesses. Our Service has a duty of care to ensure that children families, educators, and visitors of the Service are provided with a high level of protection during the hours of the Service's operation. We aim to manage illnesses and prevent the spread of infectious diseases throughout the Service. Immunisation is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases before they come into contact with them in the community. Immunisation not only protects individuals, but also others within the community, by reducing the spread of disease and illnesses.

SCOPE

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to minimise the spread of infectious diseases and viruses by implementing recommendations as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood*

education and care services (Fifth Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council and advice provided from the Australian Health Protection Principal committee

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.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded from the Service 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.

This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Quality Area 2 policies:

- Immunisation Policy
- Sick Children Policy
- Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy and
- Medical Conditions Policy and
- Handwashing Policy

INFORMATION TO BE DISPLAYED AT THE SERVICE.

INFORMATION	WEBSITE	PHONE NUMBER
The National Immunisation Program (NIP) Service	https://beta.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-immunisation-program	1800 020 103
Department of Health	In the event of a community spread virus- (COVID-19) publications from Government agencies will be displayed https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-campaign-resources	1800 020 080

PREVENTING INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Children enter education and care services when their immune systems are still developing. They have not been exposed to many common germs and therefore are susceptible to bacteria that may cause

infections. Given the close physical contact children have with other children in early childhood and care, it is very easy for infectious diseases and illnesses to spread through normal daily activities.

Our Service implements rigorous hygienic practices to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases including:

- effective hand washing hygiene
- cough and sneeze etiquette
- use of gloves
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- effective environmental cleaning toys and resources (including bedding)
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser upon arrival and departure at the Service
- Physical distancing (if recommended)

Reporting Outbreaks to the Public Health Unit

- Outbreaks of communicable diseases and contagious viruses represent a threat to public health. To help prevent outbreaks, the Department of Health monitors the number of people who contract certain infectious diseases and their characteristics, the recent travel or attendance of infected people in a public place or on public transport, and works with health specialists and doctors to help prevent the transmission of diseases to other people.

NEW IMMUNISATION REQUIREMENTS

Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent many childhood infectious diseases. As of January 2018, unvaccinated children due to their parent's conscientious objection are no longer able to be enrolled in childcare. Children who cannot be fully vaccinated due to a medical condition or who are on a recognised catch-up schedule may still be enrolled upon presentation of the appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner who meets the criteria stated by the Australian Government.

Only parents of children (less than 20 years of age) who are fully immunised or are on a recognised catch-up schedule can receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement.

The relevant vaccinations are those under the *National Immunisation Program (NIP)*, which covers the vaccines usually administered before age five. These vaccinations must be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Educators and other staff at our Service are highly recommended to keep up to date with all immunisations including yearly influenza vaccinations. These include vaccinations recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Refer to Immunisation Policy for more information

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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 or any confirmed case of COVID-19

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

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- eg (COVID-19)

Management will ensure:

- That all information regarding the prevention and transmission of infectious diseases is sourced from a recognised health authority.
- exclusion periods for people with infectious diseases recommended by Government Authorities are implemented for all staff, children, parents, families and visitors
- advice and recommendations from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and Safe Work Australia will be implemented where reasonably possible
- The implementation of recommendations from *staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.
- Children are protected from harm by ensuring relevant policies and procedures are followed regarding health and safety within the Service.
- a staff immunisation record that documents each staff member's previous infection or immunisations (including dates) is developed and maintained
- They collect, maintain, and appropriately store the required enrolment documents and enrolment information, including health and immunisation records of children in the Service.

A Nominated Supervisor/ Responsible person will ensure:

- a hygienic environment is promoted and maintained
- children are supported in their understanding of health and hygiene practices throughout the daily program and routine (hand washing, hand drying, cough and sneeze etiquette)
- educators and staff are aware of relevant immunisation guidelines for children and themselves
- an Immunisation History Statement for each child is collected on enrolment and maintained/updated regarding the child's immunisation status (AIR) and any medical conditions
- families are provided with relevant sourced materials and information on infectious diseases, health, and hygiene including:
 - exclusion guidelines in the event of a vaccine preventable illness at the Service for children that are not immunised or have not yet received all their immunisations
 - Advice and information regarding any infectious diseases in general and information regarding any specific infectious illnesses that are suspected/present in the Service.

- families are provided with information about an infectious disease by displaying and emailing the Infectious Diseases Notification Form and details
- families are advised that they must alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an Infectious Illness
- all educators are mindful and maintain confidentiality of individual children's medical circumstances
- that opportunities for educators to source pertinent up to date information from trusted sources on the prevention of infectious diseases and maintaining health and hygiene are provided
- that opportunities for staff, children, and families to have access to health professionals by organising visits/guest speakers to attend the service to confirm best practice are provided
- Families are advised to keep children at home if they are unwell. If a child has been sick, they must be well for **24hrs** before returning to the Service. For example, if a child is absent due to illness or is sent home due to illness, they will be unable to attend the next day as a minimum. The Nominated Supervisor may approve the child's return to the Service if families provide a doctor's certificate/clearance certifying that the child is no longer contagious and is in good health. Please note; it is not always possible to obtain a doctor's certificate or clearance for suspected cases of an illness. The decision to approve a child's return is up to the Approved Provider/Nominated supervisor
- to complete the register of *Illness, Accident or Trauma* and/or document incidents of infectious diseases no later than 24 hours of an illness or infectious disease occurring in the Service.
- educators or staff who have diarrhoea or an infectious disease do not handle food for others and are not to return to work until they have been symptom free for 24 hours
- Any risk to a child or adult with complex medical needs is minimised in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus. This may require a risk assessment and decision-making regarding the suitability of attendance of the child or staff member during this time

Educators will ensure:

- That any child suspected of having an infectious Illness is responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times.
- any child suspected of having an infectious illness is isolated from other children and supervised whilst waiting for collection by parents or guardian
- That appropriate health and safety procedures are implemented when treating ill children.
- Families are aware of the need to collect their unwell child/ children as soon as practicable.

- Families are advised that they must alert the Service if their child is diagnosed with an Infectious Illness.
- all resources or items touched by a child with a suspected illness are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected- (cushions, pillows, toys)
- Their own immunisation status is maintained, and the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor is advised of any updates to their immunisation status.
- Opportunities are provided for children to participate in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities, and intentional practice such as hand washing, sneezing and cough etiquette.
- Consideration is given to the combination of children to decrease the risk of attaining an infectious illness when planning the routines/program of the day.
- They adhere to the Service's health and hygiene policy including:
 - Hand washing
 - Daily cleaning of the Service
 - Wearing gloves (particularly when in direct contact with bodily fluids)
 - Appropriate and hygienic handling and preparation of food
- They maintain up to date knowledge with respect to Health and Safety through on-going professional development opportunities.
- Children do not share beds at the same time.
- Paper towel and disinfectant is used to clean the beds after each use.
- That any toy that is mouthed by a child is placed immediately in the mouthed toy basket area to be washed with warm soapy water at the end of the day. All washable toys out on display for the children are to be washed on a weekly basis to decrease the risk of cross contamination and recorded with the date and a signature as evidence.
- that cots or mattresses are placed at least 1.5m away from each other if physical distancing measures are required to be implemented
- That all play dough is made fresh every week. If there is an outbreak of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, or any other contagious communicable disease, play dough is to be discarded at the end of each day and a new batch made each day for the duration of the outbreak. Children are to wash their hands before and after using the play dough.

Prevention strategies for minimising the spread of disease within our Service include all staff ensuring:

- full adherence to the NHMRC childcare cleaning guidelines

- mops used for toilet accidents are to be soaked in disinfectant in a bucket in the laundry sink and then air-dried
- that a daily clean is carried out on other surfaces that may transmit germs such as high touch objects including doorknobs, tables, light switches, handles, remotes, play gyms, low shelving, etc. This will be increased to several times a day if an outbreak of an infectious disease/virus has been recorded in the Service or to minimise the risk of transmission of a virus such as COVID-19
- If a child has a toileting accident, the items are placed in a plastic bag with the child's name on it. The plastic bag will be stored in a sealed container labelled 'soiled/wet clothing' for parents to take home
- cloths are colour coded so that a separate cloth is used to clean floors, bathroom, art and craft, and meal surfaces
- Any toys that are mouthed by a child are placed immediately in the 'mouthed toys' basket located in each classroom and washed with warm soapy water at the end of the day. All washable toys out on display for the children are to be washed on a weekly basis to decrease the risk of cross contamination and recorded with the date and a signature as evidence.
- toys and equipment (that are difficult to wash) will be washed with detergent (or soap and water) and air-dried in sunlight
- Washable toys and equipment will be washed in detergent and hot water and aired dried
- Floor surfaces will be cleaned on a daily basis after each meal and at the end of each day
- Toilets/bathrooms will be cleaned in the middle of the day, the end of the day and whenever needed throughout the day using disinfectant and paper towel.
- Disposable paper towel and disinfectant are used to clean bodily fluids off beds, floors, bathrooms, etc.
- Pregnant staff members should not change nappies or assist in toileting or cleaning up toileting accidents to prevent unexpected cross contamination and risk of contracting Cytomegalovirus (CMV).
(see *Pregnancy in Early Childhood Policy*)

Families will:

- Advise the Service of their child's immunisation status, by providing approved written documentation for the Service to copy and place in the child's file.
- Advise the Service when their child's immunisation/medical condition is updated to ensure that immunisation and medical records are up to date.
- Provide sufficient spare clothing, particularly if the child is toilet training.
- Adhere to the Service's policy regarding *Sick Children* and exclusion requirements

- Exclude their child from care if they display symptoms of an infectious illness or disease or in the event of a vaccine preventable disease occurs in the Service and their child is not immunised fully
- Advise the Service when their child's medical action plan is updated
- adhere to the Service's restrictions of entry into the Service in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease or virus
- adhere to the Service's policy regarding *Hand Washing*

Resources

[Recommended exclusion periods- Poster Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#)

- [Minimum periods for exclusion from childcare services \(Victoria\)](#)

Source

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

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

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

Department of Human Resources: National Immunisation Program Schedule: <https://beta.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-immunisation-program>

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

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).

Medicare Australia (Department of Human Services): <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/medicare>

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

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

No Jab No Play: <https://beta.health.gov.au/resources/publications/no-jab-no-pay-new-requirements-fact-sheet>

Public Health Act 2010

Public Health Amendment Act 2017

Public Health Regulation 2012

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Safe Work Australia

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	May 2020	NEXT REVIEW DATE	June 2021
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional information from Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and Safe Work Australia re: physical distancing, immunisation for staff, risk minimisation for vulnerable children/adults, additional cleaning Requirement of a doctor's certificate for suspected cases of infectious disease made editable for individual services to decide upon Pregnancy in Early Childhood reference and risks of CMV and pregnancy <p>Inclusion of recommended exclusion periods Poster link – Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in ECEC</p>		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation information added regarding infectious illnesses Added mandatory reporting to public health unit information Rearranged some content into new headings- Prevention Strategies deleted repeated items New sources added 	June 2021	
June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated the opening statement, included the 'Related Policy' section and made general improvements to grammar to support further understanding and implementation. 	June 2019	
May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor changes made to policy and terminology to ensure best practice 	June 2018	
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated the references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard 	June 2018	