



GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea also can occur, and 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 and sneezes. This can happen when people are exposed to droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person, or 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 is the single best way to prevent influenza. 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.

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

Influenza vaccine is recommended for:

- all [children age 6 months until their 5th birthday](#)
- people who care for children 0-5 years of age
- Children <6 months old are not eligible for the flu vaccine, but are at high risk of influenza complications. The best way to protect children <6 months of age is to vaccinate everyone around them.
- people of any age who have [medical conditions](#) that place them at increased risk for serious 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 hands are visibly soiled, or an alcohol-based hand rub when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly soiled.
- Encourage care providers to wash their hands to the extent possible between 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 the hands become soiled.
- Encourage children to wash hands when their hands have become soiled. Teach children to wash hands for 15-20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).

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- 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 rub.
- 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, an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant, or EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Always follow label instructions when using any EPA-registered disinfectant. If EPA-registered chlorine bleach is not available and a generic (i.e., store brand) chlorine bleach is used, mix ¼ 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) or chills, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches. Send the child home, if possible, and advise the parent to contact the child's doctor.

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

- Encourage parents of sick children to keep the children home and away from the child care setting until the children have 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.

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Resources

The following resources provide information about flu that may be adapted for use in the child care setting:

CDC Resources

- CDC has prepared information for schools "[Stop the Spread of Germs: Actions for schools.](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school)" This is available at: www.cdc.gov/flu/school.
- CDC has prepared a poster for schools that illustrates the messages: "Be a Germstopper." This is available at: www.cdc.gov/germstopper.
- CDC has information about the flu in question and answer format: "[About the Flu: Questions & Answers.](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa)" This is available at: www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa.

State and Local Health Departments

Some state and/or local health departments have information for child care centers. Contact the local or state health department by phone or the state health department through the state's web site.

Other Resources

- "It's a Snap" offers free educational program materials about making hand washing an integral part of the school day. This is available at: www.itsasnap.org/index.asp.
- The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools has the following information about the flu: "School Health Issues: Flu Season and Schools." This is available at: www.healthinschools.org/sh/influenza.asp.
- The [National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care](http://www.nrc.uchsc.edu) has developed guidance for child care programs: [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, Second Edition](http://www.nrc.uchsc.edu). This is available at: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/index.html>.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu, or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6358 (TTY).