

Questions: "Winter is coming, Gear Up for Staying Healthy!"

1. Are there any sites that my child care parents can go to get a free flu shot for their children?
 - <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/flu/Vaccine.htm#where>
 - Local health departments
2. How do we differentiate between seasonal allergy symptoms and a true viral infection?
 - Handout- US Department of Health and Human Services: "Is It a Cold or the Flu?"
3. How many hours a day should an infant be outside according to ITERS?
 - According to the ITERS, outdoor space must be used by children in the group at least once a day, three times a week. That includes both infants and toddlers. This is to provide fresh air and outdoor physical experiences that all children require for good health. It can be difficult to take infants outdoors due to their schedules for routine care.
 - There is not a specified time requirement for being outdoors for active physical play.
 - Children must be outdoors long enough to reasonably benefit from the experience.
 - Five to ten minutes for toddlers is usually not long enough. In a full day program, in acceptable weather, at least 1/2 hour would be expected for toddlers; shortened if the program has a shorter day of less than 8 hours (e.g. - 4 hour program day- 1/4 of hour).
 - The length of time outdoors for infants might be shorter depending on the child's response.
 - Except in bad weather or severe environmental health conditions of pollution, active precipitation, public warning about air quality, cold, heat, and so forth, outdoor activities can continue.

- Children should be dressed according to weather conditions for hot or cold with outdoor protections such as shelters.

(All About the ITERS-R, D. Cryor)

4. How do you handle when you have a sick toddler and your director wants you to keep him/her in the class until parents pick the child up? This is one of the reasons many children get sick in a workplace.

- This is a tough situation. The goal is to locate the child to minimize exposing others who have not been in contact with the child. It is also important that all children receive competent and nurturing care from someone familiar to them.
- Depending on symptoms and program policies, licensing regulation specifies that sick children need to be excluded.
- What is the program's policy regarding sheltering in place of sick children?
- If the classroom is used to house the child until parents arrive to pick-up, you may need to explore ways to set up the classroom to isolate the child to decrease further exposure in the classroom without compromising safety.

5. I would like to know when it is infection or just a cold.

- It is difficult to visually tell the difference between a cold and an infection. This requires a doctor's assessment.
- Handout- US Department of Health and Human Services: "Is It a Cold or the Flu?"

6. It seems like parents give Motrin or Tylenol before dropping the child off and they are not well but don't have a fever so, technically, I can't send them home. The fever usually comes in the afternoon when the meds have worn off. Is there anything that can be done in such cases?

- Unfortunately, this happens more than we care for, particularly when parents have limited time off from work.

How best to handle it:

- Communication: It is important that you let parents know from the start what your policies are so they are not caught off guard.

- Plan ahead with families on how to manage illness through communication and *parent plans* for when the child is sick and communicate this when parents enroll their children as well as before flu season begins.
 - How do you notify families and staff when there is an exposure to an infectious illness?
7. When dropping off, parents mention "he/she didn't have a good night, but no fever!" My sick policy is with a fever of 100°F or over, they can't be in child care.
- Just a reminder, you can develop policies that are stricter than licensing standards but not less strict or looser than licensing.
 - Communication: It is important that you let parents know from the start what your policies are so they are not caught off guard.
 - Plan ahead with families how to manage illness through communication and *parent plans* for when the child is sick.
 - How do you notify families and staff when there is an exposure to an infectious illness?
 - The policy you develop must be in line with the best practice/scientifically sound as well as something that you/your staff are comfortable enforcing.
8. The biggest problem I encounter is fevers over 101° F and the parents are telling us it is teething. I was always lead to believe that fevers due to teething tend to be low grade. Could you clarify this?
- Although tender and swollen gums could cause a baby's temperature to be a little higher than normal, teething doesn't usually cause high fever or diarrhea. If a baby does develop a fever during the teething phase, something else is probably causing the fever and may need a closer examination by the doctor.
 - A fever is often, but not always, indicative of an infectious process. It is important to be consistent in where and how you take the child's temperature.
 - Armpit temperatures are the preferred method in a child care setting.
 - No child under age four years should have an oral temperature taken.

- An oral temperature is acceptable for older children who are able to follow simple directions.
- Ear temperatures are not the best practice because they are frequently inaccurate, particularly with an ear infection or excessive ear wax. They can also be uncomfortable for some children.
- Never take a temperature rectally in child care settings.
- Glass thermometers are never to be used in a child care setting.
- If the child has a higher than normal temperature, check to see if the child is overdressed.
- Undress to one layer of clothing and retake. You may also retake a temperature if the child continues to feel warm to touch or if there is a change in behavior.
- Most illnesses present with other symptoms along with the fever.
- Be sure to check for other signs of illness. A child should be excluded if he/she is unable to participate in classroom activities and staff determine that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.
- There are some exclusion criteria differences depending on whether you work in a child day center or family day home.
- According to the Virginia Department of Social Services Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers, a child must be excluded for a temperature over 101°F with behavior change.
- Licensed Family Day Home regulations state that an axillary, or temperature taken under the armpit, reading of 100°F with behavior change is reason for exclusion.
- A written policy and procedure, or how-to steps, on taking a child's temperature should be made available to all child care providers.

9. What is the general sick policy that most child care sites use?

- There are a number of resources that can be used. I have included them on your agendas:

10. How do you respond to parents' questions when they are adamant that their child is fine? I am referring to objective illnesses, for example, three watery BM.

- The program's policies and licensing standards will outline the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of sick children.
- Resource on your agenda: *Managing Infectious Illness in Child Care and Schools*, S. Aaronson is a great resource. It is simple and straight-forward.

Summary

- **Your role is to observe and identify when a child is too sick to remain in care; not to diagnose what is causing the illness.**
- You will need to decide whether or not a child is healthy enough to stay in your care based on these observations.
- Some things to consider are whether the child's symptoms:
 - Prevent the child from participating comfortably in activities.
 - Result in a need for increased care by staff.
 - Pose a risk of spreading infection to others.
- Determine how you are communicating with families about illness practices in your program and make sure everyone is on board with keeping healthy.