

# Frequently Asked Questions About Outbreak Management for Parents, Guardians, and Visitors

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) provides support to licensed child care centres to reduce the spread of illness. For more information on child care and outbreak management, please visit [www.smdhu.org/childcare](http://www.smdhu.org/childcare).

## What is an outbreak?

An outbreak is defined as an increase of illness above normal (baseline) levels for the centre or room.

There are two types of outbreaks:

- i. Enteric (Gastrointestinal) which usually involves symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- ii. Respiratory which usually involves symptoms of fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat etc.

## How will I know when my child's classroom or centre is in outbreak?

When an outbreak is suspected or confirmed, your child care centre will post outbreak signage at the entrances to notify parents, families and visitors upon entry. Child care centres will provide updates on the progress of the outbreak.



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### What is expected of parents, guardians, and visitors during an outbreak?

Parents will be asked to watch for symptoms in their child and notify their child care centre as soon as possible of any illness. If your child has symptoms (as listed below), keep them home until they are feeling better, or as otherwise discussed with the centre.

Visitors will be asked to change their visit, if possible, until the outbreak is over.

### What signs and symptoms should I watch for in my child?

For an enteric (gastrointestinal) outbreak – watch for nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting and diarrhea.

For a respiratory outbreak – watch for fever, cough, runny nose, stuffy nose, sore throat, difficulty swallowing, muscle pain, headache, decreased appetite, extreme tiredness, shortness of breath.

**Call 911** if your child has severe symptoms, such as:

- trouble breathing or severe shortness of breath
- pain in the chest
- new onset of confusion
- difficulty waking up or staying awake
- pale, grey or blue-coloured skin, lips or nail beds

### When can my child return to care if they are sent home or excluded due to illness?

In general, the health unit gives centres the minimum requirements for when a child and/or staff sent home due to illness may return to child care. These are:

- 48 hours symptom free (during enteric outbreak)
- Fever free and symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours and, child/staff are well enough to participate in programming or work (during respiratory outbreak)

Speak to your child care centre for their policies regarding return to programming.

### What will the child care centre be doing to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak?

There are several outbreak measures the centre will be taking including:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of toys and the environment
- Excluding ill children and staff until symptoms are going away
- Classrooms are grouped together to prevent spread to other classrooms.
- Changing activities to prevent the spread of illness

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### How long does an outbreak last?

A child care centre remains in outbreak until there is a return to normal illness rate. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is consulted to officially declare the outbreak over.

### Where can I find more information on health unit requirements at my child's centre?

You can find more frequently asked questions on the child care page of our website [here](#).