

Child Care Connection



FOOD SAFETY – SPECIAL EVENTS AND BBQS

Bringing families together for special events and BBQs is a wonderful way to celebrate milestones and create lasting memories. Ensuring food safety is key to making the day enjoyable for everyone!

Serving food at the child care centre:

- Serve food prepared in the child care's inspected kitchen or another inspected kitchen. Do not serve foods prepared in a private home.
- If using your regular catering company, ensure there is enough space to hold foods in way that keeps them hot (above 60°C) or cold (below 4°C) from the time of drop off until serving.
- **For outdoor events:**
 - Set up a temporary hand wash sink for the food handler.
 - Protect food from contamination by ensuring it is stored in sealed containers or always covered when outside of the kitchen. If you are preparing food outdoors, ensure that your food handling area is covered with a canopy.
 - If you have any questions about safe food handling at a temporary set-up, contact your public health inspector to discuss further.

Events outside the child care centre:

- Hosting a temporary event at a location which is not routinely inspected by the health unit is classified as a "special event".

Visit the [Special Events](#) page of our website for more information. If you are planning to serve food at a location outside of the child care centre, ensure to submit an application to the health unit at least 14 days before the event.



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SENSORY AND NATURAL PLAY

Incorporating nature-based and sensory play into child care centres offers numerous developmental benefits for children. However, it's essential to choose activities that consider safety and hygiene.

Nature-based Play Items:

When introducing natural materials indoors, conduct a thorough risk assessment:

- **Use:** Dry, freshly fallen leaves, clean sticks, rocks, and cleaned recycled plastic containers that have been disinfected and are free from damage.
- **Avoid:** Items showing signs of contamination (e.g., mould, animal feces), containers that previously held chemicals, and reusable raw wood items that are absorbent and not easily cleanable.
- Always ensure children wash their hands before and after interacting with natural items.

Print the [Nature-based Play Items Guidelines](#) for a quick reference.

Sensory Play Tables:

To maintain a safe and hygienic environment:

- Children should wash their hands before and after using sensory play tables.
- Children should be supervised to ensure hands don't enter the mouth, nose or eyes during play.
- Regularly clean and disinfect sensory tables and items to prevent the spread of germs.
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use to ensure play material is age appropriate and safe for use by children.

Print the [Sensory Play Table Guidelines](#) for a quick reference.



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EXTREME HEAT, MOSQUITOES AND TICKS

Mosquito and tick-borne diseases, extreme heat, wildfires, and air quality can be concerning for child care operators in Simcoe Muskoka. West Nile virus (WNV) is transmitted by mosquitoes and can cause severe illness. Blacklegged ticks, which can carry diseases, such as Lyme disease, are becoming more prevalent due to climate change. Extreme heat events are increasing in frequency and intensity, leading to heat illnesses and can be harmful to one's mental health and well-being. Wildfires, exacerbated by climate change, contribute to poor air quality, which can affect respiratory health.

Mosquitoes and Ticks

Child care operators can take measures to protect children. For WNV, ensure that outdoor play areas are free of standing water where mosquitoes breed. Use insect repellent according to the manufacturer's directions and dress children in long sleeves and pants when outdoors. To prevent tick bites, keep play areas clear of tall grass and brush, and conduct regular tick checks on children. Watch the short video [here](#) posted on the SMDHU website to learn how to do a full body tick check.

Extreme Heat

During extreme heat events, ensure children stay hydrated and limit outdoor activities during high heat periods. Provide shaded areas and use fans or air conditioning to keep indoor spaces cool. For air quality, including wildfire smoke, monitor the air quality by using the [Air Quality Health Index](#) and review the recommended actions for child care centres noted in the [Wildfire Smoke: Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centres](#).

By implementing these measures, child care operators can create a safer environment for children and reduce the associated health risks.

Extreme Heat Resources

- [Heat Health Messages for the Public During a Heat Event: A Resource for Municipal and Community Partners](#)
(Version 1: January 2025)
- [Extreme Heat: Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centres](#)
(Version 1: January 2025)

Air Quality and Wildfire Smoke Resources

- [Wildfire Smoke and Health Messages During a Wildfire Smoke Event: A Resource for Municipal and Community Partners](#)
(Version 1: January 2025)
- [Air Pollution and Health Messages During a Poor Air Quality Event: A Resource for Municipal and Community Partners](#)
(Version 1: January 2025)
- [Wildfire Smoke: Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centres](#)
(Version 1: January 2025)

For more information, contact the **Infection Prevention and Control program** at 1(877) 721-7520 ext. 5744, Monday to Friday, 8:30am - 4:30pm or visit www.smdhu.org/childcare

