

Child Care Connection

As we head into fall and winter, it is a good time to revisit infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures. This edition covers managing personal items, hand hygiene, and environmental cleaning during respiratory outbreaks.

WHAT IS A RESPIRATORY OUTBREAK?

A **respiratory outbreak** happens when multiple children or staff develop similar symptoms (e.g., cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat) within a short period of time. These illnesses spread through droplets or contact with nose and throat discharge. Illnesses can spread quickly in child care settings due to close contact, developing immune systems and shared spaces. Use the **Outbreak Quick Start guide** to determine if your centre is in outbreak and for next steps.

Respiratory outbreaks can be caused by:

1. **Reportable diseases** like influenza, chickenpox, and measles, which must be reported to SMDHU.
2. **Non-reportable diseases** such as hand, foot and mouth disease, fifth disease, and the common cold. While these illnesses are not individually reportable, ***an increase or cluster of cases must still be reported to SMDHU***. Reporting helps guide appropriate IPAC measures to limit spread.

Additional outbreak resources can be found at smdhu.org/childcare.



PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND SLEEP EQUIPMENT

To support effective infection prevention and control, child care centres must ensure that personal items—such as creams, ointments, wipes, hats, and pacifiers—are clearly labeled and stored separately. Sharing or borrowing of these items is strictly prohibited to prevent cross-contamination.

Sleep equipment, including cribs, crib mattresses, sleeping cots, linens, blankets, and personal stuffed toys, must be routinely cleaned and disinfected, or laundered weekly and as needed. Each item must be labeled and assigned to a single child to maintain hygiene standards.

Child care centres may choose to launder linens and stuffed toys on-site or send them home with families weekly for laundering.



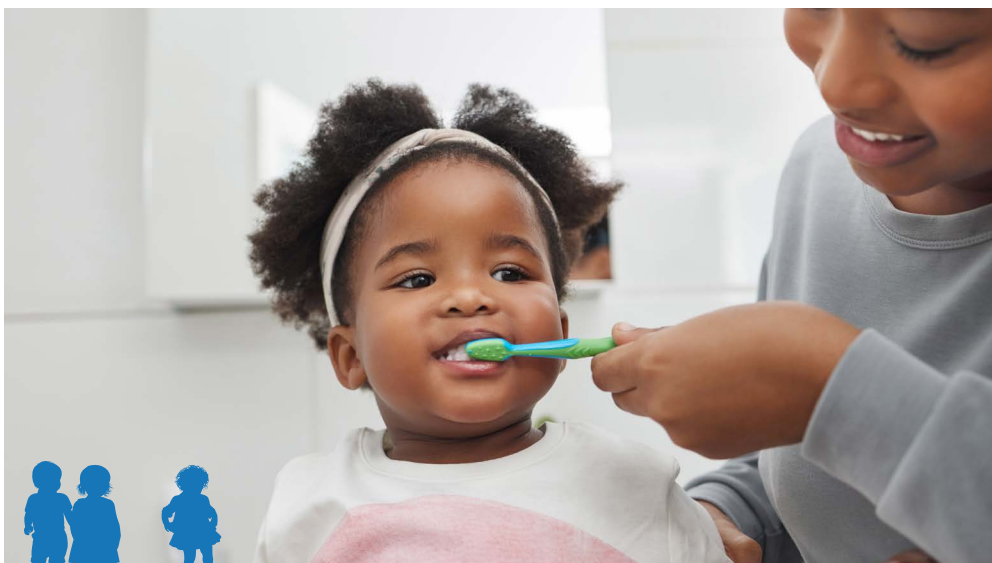
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HAND HYGIENE, GLOVES AND DIAPERING

Cleaning your hands is the most effective way to prevent illness. Washing with liquid soap and water is especially important when hands are visibly soiled. While gloves are a useful form of personal protective equipment (PPE), they **do not** replace proper hand hygiene. Hand hygiene—using soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)—must still be performed before and after glove use.

During diapering, hand hygiene is required three times for each child 1) before starting the process, 2) after removing a soiled diaper and before applying barrier cream and/or a clean diaper and 3) again at the end of the process. Hand hygiene must be performed between each child to prevent cross contamination of surfaces and prevent spread of illness. For more information, please take a look at SMDHUs diapering steps [fact sheet](#).



TOOTHBRUSHING

Keeping the mouth clean is an important aspect of overall health and child care centres can play a role in supporting toothbrushing. For guidance on maintaining proper IPAC measures during toothbrushing activities, please refer to the Durham Region Health Department's [fact sheet](#).

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ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Keeping a child care centre clean and germ-free helps protect children and staff from getting sick. Regular cleaning and disinfection stops the spread of bacteria and viruses. When staff follow clear rules, the centre stays safe and healthy for everyone.

Follow the Manufacturers' Directions

- Read the product label before use. If using bleach, follow the [Surface Disinfection with Chlorine \(Bleach\)](#) instructions for use.
- Mix solutions exactly as the label says.
- Keep surfaces wet for the contact time (the time the disinfectant needs to work).
- Store all products in their original containers or labelled containers and out of children's reach.

Keep Surfaces and Items in Good Repair

- Check toys, equipment, chairs, cots and cribs for cracks or loose parts.
- Repair or replace anything that cannot be cleaned due to damage.
- Choose soft items (like cushions or plush toys) with removable, machine-washable covers.
- Keep a log of repairs and cleanings to track what has been done.

Maintain Clean Walls, Ceilings and Furniture

- Follow a cleaning schedule for each room. SMDHU provides a minimum requirement [Cleaning and Disinfection schedule](#).
- For furniture, floors, walls and/or ceilings choose materials that are easily cleanable.
- Fix chipped paint, broken panels and loose fasteners right away.
- Clean spills on ceilings or walls immediately to prevent mold growth.



RESOURCES & TOOLS

- [Surface Disinfection with Chlorine \(Bleach\)](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection Checklist](#)
- [Steps for Toy Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

UPDATES & REMINDERS

- Revised version of A Guide for Caregivers: Common Childhood Illness
- Need help completing a line list? Review the [SMDHU line list video](#).

CONTACT US:

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit offices are Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Call **705-721-7520** or toll free **1-877-721-7520**

- For infection prevention and control questions or concerns, including reporting outbreaks, a Public Health Inspector can be reached on our **NEW extension 5744**.
- To report a [Disease of Public Health Significance](#), contact the Infectious Diseases team at **extension 8809**.
- For immunizations questions or concerns use **extension 8807**.
- For reports of animal bites/scratches use **extension 8811**.

