



Preventing the Spread of Influenza in Day Nurseries

What is influenza?

Influenza, commonly called 'the flu', is a very contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. Influenza in young children can lead to serious complications and hospitalizations. The usual flu season in North America is from November to April.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Influenza symptoms include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also be seen in children.

How is influenza transmitted?

Influenza is mainly spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. A person can also pick up the virus by touching surfaces contaminated by nasal discharge or saliva from an infected person and then touching one's own nose/mouth before washing their hands.

What can be done to prevent influenza?

Vaccination against influenza before the flu season starts each year is the best way to prevent this disease. In day nurseries, vaccination along with other infection prevention and control measures can help to prevent the spread of influenza among children and staff. **The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends healthy children 6 to 23 months of age receive the influenza vaccine as well as individuals providing child care to children younger than 24 months.** Further, NACI encourages healthy people ages 2 to 64 years to receive the influenza vaccine.

Helpful Hints

- Encourage yearly vaccination of staff (including part time/volunteers) and children.
- Teach and encourage staff and children to wash their hands for at least 15 seconds using the proper handwashing technique.
- Ensure designated handwashing sinks are supplied with liquid soap and paper towels at all times.
- Encourage staff and children to use a hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly soiled and when handwashing facilities are not easily accessible.
- Encourage staff and children to cough and sneeze into their sleeve/elbow, followed by good hand washing. Alternatively, staff and children can cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and discard the tissue immediately after use.
- Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces, toys, and commonly shared items.
- Use an appropriate and approved disinfectant for disinfection of equipment and surfaces.
- Observe children for symptoms of respiratory illness, particularly when influenza is reported to be circulating in the community.
- Ensure a policy is in place promoting to parents the importance of keeping their children out of the day nursery when they are ill.
- Encourage staff to stay at home if they are ill
- Contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit when there is an increase in respiratory illnesses, above the baseline level, occurring in the day nursery.

For more information call the Communicable Disease Team at ext. 8809.