INFECTION CONTROL GUIDELINES

FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

Healthy Child Manitoba
Putting children and families first

Manitoba

Introduction

The following infection control guidelines have been developed for early learning and child care (ELCC) centres, as well as for child care providers who look after groups of children daily in their homes.

Communicable diseases can spread any place where children interact, particularly in schools and child care facilities. The best way to control the spread of disease is through good health practices. Therefore, it is essential for all child care providers to know what these practices are, so they can use them to help prevent the transmission of communicable diseases in their centres or homes.

These guidelines are based on current medical knowledge. Given the frequency of new developments in medical research, it's vital that infection prevention and control practices and guidelines are examined regularly.

Protect Yourself

Seasonal viral infections, such as colds and flus, are a fact of life. Once they arrive, they can be very difficult to control. For instance, a person who's contracted a virus can be without any symptoms for days, but still be very contagious.

Therefore, protecting yourself from becoming ill and passing the virus on to others, begins with prevention. It's extremely important to maintain a healthy lifestyle, which includes a proper diet and regular exercise. This will boost your immune system and allow you to better fight any virus that's out there.

Manitoba Health recommends that all child care providers get an annual influenza vaccine.

Illness in Children

The most common illnesses in children are respiratory infections (colds, croup, strep throat) and ear infections. Because they haven't yet developed immunity to most infections they're exposed to, younger children are at greater risk of becoming ill. To make things worse, infants and young children frequently put toys in their mouth, which only increases the spread of germs from one child to another.

Therefore, child care providers must ensure that all toys, objects and surfaces children come into contact with, are cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. Another common way children spread germs is by not washing their hands properly after using the toilet. This is why it's extremely important for child care providers to teach proper hand washing procedures, and to be role models for the children.

Manitoba Health recommends that young children be immunized and that immunizations be kept up to date.

Adapted from Canadian Paediatric Society, Well Beings (1996, 2nd ed.)

Breaking the Chain (Spread) of Infection

As we've seen, germs can spread easily from one person (or object) to another. However, there is a chain of transmission that must be present for the contamination to take place.

The chain of transmission has four links. They are:

- ***germs*** - such as a virus or bacteria
- ***host*** - the person who is sick
- ***mode of transmission*** – anything germs can contaminate (ex: toy, food, counter, our hands) and transmit to a new host
- ***new host*** (the person at risk/susceptible to getting sick)

Germs are transmitted primarily through direct or indirect contact, airborne or droplet secretion. Once transmitted, germs can survive for hours, even days in the environment, increasing the risk for infection significantly. In fact, the most contagious period is usually when the person doesn't feel ill – so the key is prevention. The transmission can be prevented by breaking one of the links in the chain.

Droplet Contamination

One way germs can spread from an infected person to an un-infected person is through droplet secretions. We all produce these droplets after coughing or sneezing without covering our mouth and nose. The droplets travel through the air, and can either be breathed in, or land in a person's nose, mouth or eyes, which can cause an infection.

Because of the high risk of infection in child care centres/ homes, it is crucial for providers, children, and all others entering this environment, to cover their mouths and noses when they sneeze or cough. This is the best way to prevent the spread of droplet secretions to others.

Adapted from Healthy Foundations by Barbara Pimento & Deborah Kernested (2000, 2nd ed.)

Routine Practices

To avoid spreading infectious (communicable) diseases, all licensed child care facilities and family child care homes should adopt Routine Practices for handling blood or body fluids, such as urine, saliva, vomit or stool.

The following good health practices are directed to child care providers. They will help you prevent the spread of infection and other communicable diseases in your child care centre/home.

1. You must wear disposable gloves any time your hands may come in direct contact with blood (or body fluids containing blood). Hands must be washed immediately after discarding gloves.

   While the use of disposable gloves is highly recommended when changing diapers, Manitoba Health advises that gloves are not needed unless blood is visible in the urine or stool. If blood is visible, always wear gloves.

   If you have open cuts or sores on your hands (ex: hangnails, paper cuts), always use disposable gloves. After use, the gloves should be discarded into a plastic- lined, covered garbage can. Hands must be washed immediately after discarding the gloves.

   You can use household rubber gloves for things like washing dishes, or sanitizing toys and objects, as long as you don't have any open sores on your hands. The gloves must be sanitized in a bleach solution **before** taking them off (see Step 4 for more on bleach solution), and hands must be washed immediately **after** removing gloves.

2. Use disposable paper towels or tissues when wiping up spills or cleaning soiled surfaces. Discard the towels or tissues in a plastic-lined, covered garbage can and wash your hands. (Follow the hand washing procedure on next page.)

3. After wiping up a spill of blood or body fluids with a disposable paper towel, clean the soiled surface with a cleaning solution. Detergent, disinfectant detergent or chemical germicide, mixed in water, are acceptable cleaning solutions for this purpose.

4. After cleaning a surface, sanitize it with a bleach solution. To prepare the bleach solution, mix 5 ml of bleach with 500 ml of water (1 part bleach to 100 parts water). Bleach solution **must be prepared daily** to be effective. If solutions are subjected to heat and/or light, the solution may have to be changed every four hours.

5. If the spill is large and a mop needs to be used, be sure to rinse the mop with a sanitizing solution (ex: bleach solution) after using it. Allow the mop to air-dry before using it again. If mopping up blood, either use a disposable mop and discard it after use, or remove the mop head and wash in hot water with detergent immediately after.

6. After cleaning up a spill, wash your hands promptly and thoroughly with soap and water. **Do not care for another child until you have washed your hands.** And remember, you need to wash your hands even if you have been wearing gloves.

7. Immediately remove clothing or linens soiled with blood, vomit, urine or stool, and place them in a plastic bag. These items can be washed as regular laundry. However, if possible, you should send the clothing home with the parent for laundering.

Hand Washing Procedure

Washing your hands is the most effective way to reduce the spread of germs and disease-causing bacteria and viruses. It is particularly important for child care providers to follow this procedure.

How To Wash Your Hands

(wash for 10-15 seconds)

- Wet your hands under warm running water.
- Put soap onto your hands and create a lather.
- Rub your hands together thoroughly (creating friction), scrubbing palm to palm, the backs of your hands, between your fingers, under your fingernails, and your wrists.
- Rinse your hands under warm running water.
- Dry your hands thoroughly using a clean disposable paper towel and throw it into the garbage.
- Use a separate paper towel to turn off taps and throw into the garbage.
- Use hand lotion to prevent chapping, if desired.

When to Wash Your Hands

- when you arrive at work
- before preparing snacks and meals
- before and after eating
- before and after feeding a child
- after going to the washroom
- after taking a child to the washroom, or assisting them (ex: zip or pull up pants)
- after changing a child's diaper
- after wiping or blowing your nose (or a child's) with a tissue
- after coughing or sneezing into hands
- after cleaning up body fluid spills such as urine, vomit, stool
- after removing disposable or household rubber gloves
- before and after giving medications, and/or performing first aid
- before and after applying sunscreen
- after coming in from outdoor play
- before and after messy play (ex: paint, glue, sandbox, water table, pets, gardening, cooking activities)
- after caring for a sick child

Adapted from http://www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/preventill/pandemic/files/HandHygiene_RefChart.pdf Well Beings: A Guide to Promote the Physical Health, Safety and Emotional Well-Being of Children in Child Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes (1996, 2nd ed.) and Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs (2002, 2nd ed.)

Alcohol-Based Hand Rubs

It is recommended that alcohol-based hand rubs have a minimum of 60 per cent ethanol (ethyl alcohol). This amount has proven to be effective in significantly reducing germs. Hand rubs should be used when soap and water are unavailable. Proper hand washing with soap and water is the most effective way to prevent the spread of disease-causing bacteria and viruses.

Hand rubs are NOT to be used if hands are visibly soiled with dirt or other contaminated material (ex: blood, vomit, stool, urine). To clean soiled hands, you must use soap and water, and follow the steps of the hand washing procedure.

Some bacteria or viral agents can survive in the environment for hours, days, and even weeks. Therefore, proper hand washing is recommended when hands become contaminated, to prevent the spread of infection.

Alcohol-based hand rubs have a tendency to dry out hands more frequently than soap and water; therefore, the use of hand lotion is suggested to prevent chapping.

Young children must be supervised while using alcohol hand rubs because it can be harmful to the child, if ingested. After the child rubs his/her hands together, allow hands to dry completely before he/she touches anything, especially hand-to-mouth contact. Store these products away from children.

Adapted from http://www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/preventill/pandemic/files/HandHygiene_RefChart.pdf www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/fs/infcontshelter.pdf and Well Beings: A Guide to Promote the Physical Health, Safety and Emotional Well-Being of Children in Child Care Centres and Family
Day Care Homes, 1996, 2nd edition

Cleaning and Sanitizing Practices

Following the appropriate steps to clean and sanitize will help eliminate germs within the centre, decreasing the transmission of disease-causing bacteria to the children and staff.

Step 1:

Cleaning – removes dirt

- Clean surface, toy or object with warm water and detergent to remove dirt, before sanitizing. Using friction helps remove most germs underneath the dirt, as well as the dirt itself.
- Rinse area or item well, and dry.

Cleaning Surfaces

- After the utility sink is clean and sanitized, fill the sink (not a bucket) with fresh hot water and detergent, using paper towels (not cloth rags) to clean surfaces.

Step 2:

Sanitizing – significantly decreases or eliminates germs

- Use 5 ml of bleach to 500 ml of water (1 part bleach to 100 parts water).
- Bleach solution **must** be mixed daily to be effective.
- This solution can be used in a variety of areas that need sanitizing, such as tables, countertops, diaper-changing area, door knobs or handles, toys, books, puzzles, toilets or potties, telephone (including body fluid spills).
- Label the sanitizer (bottle/container) with name and contents of solution.
- Store solution away from heat and light.
- Keep out of reach of children.

- Wear rubber gloves to protect hands from irritation and wash hands immediately after glove removal.
- Spray sanitizer on surface, and let solution sit for at least **30 seconds** before wiping, to be effective. The most effective procedure is to allow the surface to air-dry. When wiping, use a paper towel (not a cloth towel) to dry, and then discard into garbage.

Sanitizing Large Spills (ex: urine, stool, vomit, blood)

- Wear rubber gloves to protect your hands from blood and body fluids. If blood is present in the spill, you must wear disposable gloves.
- Clean the majority of the spill with paper towels, and discard into covered, plastic-lined garbage.
- Clean contaminated area with water and a detergent, using disposable paper towels. Use additional paper towels to rinse, and then another to dry the area.
- Sanitize the area, using freshly made bleach solution.
- Discard rubber gloves into covered, plastic-lined garbage (if household rubber gloves were used, they must be rinsed in a sanitizing solution when finished).
- If a mop was used, rinse in a sanitizing solution and air-dry (mop head up). If a mop was used for a blood spill, use a disposable mop and discard into the garbage after or remove the mop head and wash in hot water and detergent immediately after.
- Change staff's or child's clothes if soiled with blood or body fluids. Place child's clothes in a plastic bag and send home with their parents. Do not rinse out the clothes at the centre.

(See Appendix 1 – Cleaning and Sanitizing Table – for cleaning and sanitizing routines)

Appendix 1 - Cleaning and Sanitizing Table

AREA	CLEAN	SANITIZE	
Child care centre areas			
Countertops, floors, door knobs/handles	X	X	
Food prep areas, countertops, tabletops, plastic bibs highchair trays	X	X	
Carpets and area rugs	X		
Dishes and utensils that enter a child's mouth	X	X	
Small toys, books, puzzles, etc. that enter a child's mouth	X	X	
Dress-up clothes, stuffed toys, bed linens	X		
Large toys, activity centres, toy shelves, chairs and table legs	X		
Blankets, cubbies	X		
Child's soother	X		
Baby bottles	X		
Toilet and Diapering surfaces			
Toilets and toilet bowl	X	X	
Potty chair or child toilet seat (discourage use of potty chairs)		X	
Diaper-changing area		X	
Hand-washing sinks, faucets, soap dispenser, and counter surrounding sink	X	X	
Diaper pails	X	X	
General Cleaning/Sanitizing			
Outdoor sandbox toys	X	X	
Sand table toys	X	X	
Water table		X	
Cribs/cots/mats	X	X	
Mops and cleaning rags Kitchen linens	X	X	

FREQUENCY
Minimum once a day (more often when visibly soiled). Vinyl/tile floors also cleaned daily with detergent.
Before and after each use. For countertops – especially in between raw and cooked meat preparation. Launder plastic bibs (more often if needed).
Vacuum daily, when children are not present. Clean infant area carpets monthly, and preschool and school-age every 3 months (more often if soiled).
If washing by hand, centres must have one sink for washing, one for rinsing, and one for sanitizing. Allow dishes to air dry. Sanitize sink and faucets after each use (including utility sink).
Immediately after entering a child's mouth. Otherwise, twice a week in the infant/toddler room.
Machine wash weekly (more often when visibly soiled).
Weekly (more often when visibly soiled). Clean chairs and table legs twice a week for toddlers, and weekly for school-age children (more often if needed).
Monthly (more often if visibly soiled).
Rinse under hot water. Sanitize if it enters another child's mouth, or if dropped in toilet, diaper, etc.
Rinse and send home with parents to sanitize.
Clean and sanitize, minimum once a day (more often if visibly soiled).
After each child's use.
After diaper change of each child. If any visible urine or stool, wipe off using disposable paper towels and follow with sanitizing solution.
Before and after toilet routine, and before and after meal/snack routine (more often if visibly soiled).
If centre uses diaper pails, clean, sanitize and then air dry daily.
Weekly
Daily
Add fresh water daily and empty and sanitize table and toys daily.
Before another child uses it or it becomes soiled.
For *Rag mops* - hang wet mop (head-up), wash mop head with hot water and detergent once a week. For *Sponge mops* - hang wet mop (head-up) and sanitize once a week (let air-dry). Clean rags in water with detergent and then sanitize. Change and launder kitchen linens daily and as needed.

Glossary

Bacteria - Very small living organisms made of only one cell. They are present almost everywhere. While some can cause diseases, others are very helpful to humans, like the bacteria in the intestine that help digestion and bacteria that make yoghurt.

Cleaning – A method used to reduce or eliminate dirt from a surface, by using household detergent and water. Using friction while scrubbing will help eliminate most germs, as well as the dirt itself.

Routine Practices – Steps an individual takes to decrease their risk of exposure to blood and body fluids of others. Adhering to Routine Practices protects you and others from spreading bacteria/germs from one person to another.

Micro-organism – Any organism (animal or plant) of microscopic size.

Pathogen – Any disease-producing agent, especially a virus, bacteria, or other micro-organism.

Sanitize – A method used to destroy micro-organisms or pathogens by cleansing. Significantly reduces disease-causing bacteria on surfaces or objects. Bleach is one of the most common chemicals used as a sanitizing solution in a child care setting.

Virus – A micro-organism smaller than bacteria, which cannot grow or reproduce on its own. A virus invades a living cell and uses it to keep itself alive and to reproduce. Viruses cause many infections, including the common cold and the flu.