

INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY

Quality Areas: NQS 2 – Children’s Health and Safety

Policy Owner: Safety and Compliance

A light blue speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text 'Why this is important' in a dark blue, cursive font.

Why this is
important

1.0 Introduction and Purpose

We are committed to keeping our centres and support offices a safe and healthy place for all children, families, team members, and visitors. In everything we do, the safety, rights, and best interests of children are our highest priority.

Children in early learning environments are more susceptible to illness due to their developing immune systems and close contact with others. To reduce the spread of infectious diseases, we follow clear procedures for prevention, early identification, and management, including immunisation requirements and exclusion periods when someone is unwell.

These practices are guided by national health advice and relevant state or territory legislation and help us work in partnership with families to protect the wellbeing of everyone in our community.

2.0 Who does this policy apply to:

All Team Members, Children, Families, Students, Volunteers, Contractors, and Visitors

3.0 What is our Policy:

We are committed to maintaining a safe and hygienic environment where the spread of infectious diseases is minimised. We promote immunisation, uphold strict hygiene practices, and follow public health advice in the event of an outbreak.

We aim to:

- Protect children and team members from exposure to infectious diseases.
- Ensure families are informed and supported to meet immunisation and exclusion requirements.
- Respond promptly and effectively to infectious disease cases.
- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including those under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the Public Health Acts of each jurisdiction, and guidance from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

3.1 Preventing Infectious Diseases

Children attend our centres when their immune systems are still developing. They have been exposed to a limited number of viruses and diseases and are susceptible to the effects of those where they do not have sufficient immunity. Given the close physical contact children have with one another and the team members it is easy for infectious diseases and illnesses to spread through normal daily interactions and activities.

The practices we implement to minimise the risk of infectious disease includes:

- a. cleaning and hygienic practices to limit the spread of illness and infectious diseases e.g., hand washing, general cleaning of learning spaces and external cleaning of the centre, cough and sneeze etiquette, the use of gloves and other personal protective equipment
- b. the exclusion of children, team members and visitors when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus

- c. regular and effective environmental cleaning including equipment, toys and resources (including bedding)

3.2 Immunisations

3.2.1 Compliance with No Jab, No Play and No Jab, No Pay Requirements

Our centre complies with all state and territory legislation relating to No Jab, No Play and No Jab, No Pay requirements. These laws require that children are fully immunised for their age, on an approved catch-up schedule, or hold a valid medical exemption to enrol and attend early childhood education and care services (as specified in their state).

The centre will support families who are undertaking a recognised catch-up schedule by providing information and reminders to assist them in meeting their immunisation obligations. Families must provide evidence of progress throughout the catch-up period or grace period to confirm that immunisations are being completed as required. Failure to do so may result in the care of their child/ren being suspended.

Where a family does not make reasonable progress or fails to meet the immunisation requirements within the approved timeframe, the centre reserves the right to suspend or cease care until the child's immunisation status meets legislative requirements.

Families must provide an up-to-date Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement at the time of enrolment and whenever the record is updated. Enrolment and attendance cannot proceed without this documentation, as required by law. The centre maintains accurate immunisation records and ensures all practices align with current public health and funding regulations.

3.2.2. Immunisation for children

The National Immunisation Program Schedule provides a list of the vaccines currently recommended for all children dependent on their age. Additional vaccines may be required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, or children with specific health needs.

The **Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI)** recommends annual influenza vaccination for everyone over six months of age.

All children must be fully immunised for their age or must be on a recognised catch-up schedule if the child has fallen behind their vaccinations or has recently moved to Australia from overseas. When an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable illness occurs (or suspected), all children who have not received their vaccinations for that disease will be required to remain away until the centre is deemed clear of the illness and the minimum exclusion period has passed.

Some requirements will differ under State Government legislation. Please refer to your state specific legislation as outlined in the enrolment record.

3.2.4 Immunisations for team members

All team members, students and volunteers are strongly encouraged to maintain up-to-date immunisations, including influenza and other vaccines relevant to their role as outlined in *Staying Healthy in Childcare* and the National Immunization Program Schedule.

When an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable illness occurs (or suspected), all team members, students and volunteers who have not received their vaccinations for that disease will be required to remain away until the centre is deemed clear of the illness and the minimum exclusion period has passed. We may require proof of immunisation and maintain these records in accordance with privacy legislation.

Team members working with infants or vulnerable groups are particularly encouraged to remain fully immunised.

3.2.3 Post-Immunisation Reactions

It is noted that some children may experience mild reactions following immunisation, such as slight discomfort, redness, or swelling at the injection site, or a mildly raised temperature. Families are encouraged to inform the centre when their child has recently received a vaccination so that educators can provide additional monitoring and support throughout the day.

If a child becomes unwell after a vaccination or requires specific care or attention, educators will follow the centre's illness and first aid procedures, keep the child comfortable, and promptly notify the family of any concerns or changes in their condition.

3.3. Infectious Diseases

If a child displays symptoms or becomes unwell while at the centre, the family/emergency contacts will be notified. If we suspect a child or team member may have an infectious disease, they will be excluded until all symptoms have resolved and/ or they are no longer infectious.

If a potential infectious disease arises at the centre, we will:

- a. Isolate the child/team member from other children within the licensed space. Licensed space is generally the children's indoor or outdoor learning space and **not** the office, team room, foyer area, planning room or adult bathroom.
- b. Ensure the child/team member is comfortable and appropriately supervised by team members
- c. Contact the family or emergency contacts and provide details of the child's/team members condition and ask that the child/team member be collected as soon as possible (expectation is within an hour)
- d. Ensure all bedding, towels and clothing which has been used by the child/team member is washed separately and if possible, air dried in the sun
- e. Ensure all toys/equipment/resources used by the child/team member are disinfected
- f. Document any infectious disease on Be Safe and team members should contact injury assist where medical attention is required

If an infectious disease is diagnosed, families, team members and visitors of the presence of an infectious disease will be informed. This will include displaying an *Infectious Disease Sign* in the foyer/reception area and if relevant having a specific fact sheet available in the centre, on Storypark and /or emailed to families. Recommendations and advice provided in Staying Healthy in Childcare will be implemented to reduce the risk of cross infection.

Signs should be placed up in the main entrance of the centre or on the front entrance. Signs should be in place until the exclusion period ends of the last known case.

3.4 Reporting to the Health Department

If a child or team member is diagnosed with a notifiable infectious disease, the centre must promptly notify the relevant state or territory health department in accordance with public health requirements. Notifiable infectious diseases include:

- a. Vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis (whooping cough), and chickenpox.
- b. Gastrointestinal and foodborne illnesses such as salmonella, hepatitis A, and gastroenteritis outbreaks.
- c. Respiratory infections such as tuberculosis (TB), and meningococcal disease.
- d. Bloodborne and sexually transmissible infections such as hepatitis B or C (if relevant to staff).
- e. Vector-borne and other emerging diseases such as Ross River virus, malaria, or other conditions identified by health authorities.

The centre must also complete a *Third-Party Contact Log* to record information from the Health Department about notification and recommendations. This and added to Be Safe Form and forwarded to the Compliance Team before notifying families. If this is a more serious infectious disease or if the Centre Manager is absent, the centre can call compliance for advice. This ensures appropriate public health advice is followed, communication is coordinated, and control measures are implemented to protect children, families, and team members.

Where specific recommendations or actions are made by the Health Department, these will be requested in writing by the Centre Manager so that they can be actioned appropriately via our facilities help desk, this includes the requests for deep cleans.

3.5 Pregnant or immune-compromised Team Members

Once an infectious disease has been confirmed by pathology and Public Health, the affected team member must contact their registered medical practitioner to inform them of the confirmed illness in the centre. The team member should seek confirmation from their doctor regarding whether it is appropriate for them to continue working in their current role or within the centre.

If the doctor advises that the team member should not continue their usual duties, this advice must be provided in writing and include any specific recommendations, such as an exclusion period or modified duties.

The Centre Manager or Responsible Person must then notify the Portfolio Manager and the People and Culture Department to discuss and arrange suitable alternative work options, if available.

3.6 Exclusion

Any person who has, or is showing signs or symptoms of, an infectious disease requiring exclusion will be excluded from the centre or office for the period specified in Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services (NHMRC). This measure helps minimise the risk of infection to others. Exclusion may apply in cases of confirmed, suspected, or symptomatic illness.

A medical certificate will not be accepted if the individual's condition does not meet the Staying Healthy criteria for return. For example, a child with hand, foot and mouth disease cannot return to care until all blisters have completely dried, even if a medical certificate has been provided. Please note that Public Health Units may apply additional exclusion periods during outbreaks.

An individual may return to the centre or office once one of the following criteria has been met:

- A registered medical practitioner provides written confirmation that the symptoms are not related to an infectious disease, and the person poses no risk to others; or
- The full exclusion period has passed, and the individual is no longer showing symptoms; or
- Appropriate and effective treatment has been completed.

In the event of a vaccine-preventable disease, Public Health authorities or the organisation may exclude unimmunised children or staff (including pregnant team members) to protect their health and safety.

<p>The most important documents I need are: Identifying the symptoms Infectious Disease Sign</p>	<p>Other supporting documents will include: Family Communication</p>
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4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 The Approved Provider will:

1. Ensure that centres have the current resources to support the notification and information sharing for families and team members
2. Remain up to date and informed about current legislation, information, research, and best practice regarding the management of infectious diseases
3. Ensure that any changes to the exclusion table or immunisation schedule are communicated to team members and families in a timely manner

4.2 The Centre Manager / Nominated Supervisor (NS) will:

1. Ensure that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the centre, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease such as cleaning and notifying the health department
2. Ensure that a child or team member who is not immunised against a vaccine-preventable disease does not attend the centre when an infectious disease is diagnosed and has been infectious while attending the centre.
3. Ensure that information from the Department of Health about the recommended minimum exclusion periods is accessible at the centre

4. Ensure that a BeSafe event is logged for any suspected or confirmed case of a notifiable infectious disease. See *definitions* for more information
5. Ensure the exclusion requirements for infectious diseases are adhered to as per the recommended minimum exclusion periods
6. Ensure families, team members and visitors are advised of infectious disease outbreak where the case was infectious at the centre by displaying the infectious diseases sign in the foyer/reception area and may also communicate via Storypark or email. Where an infectious disease is contained to one room, the Infectious Disease Sign can be placed at the entry of the room
7. Contact the family of a child who is unwell and displaying symptoms of an infectious or vaccine-preventable disease
8. Ensure that a minimum of one team member in attendance holds a current approved first aid qualification
9. Implement hygiene and infection control practices and ensure that they are adhered to by everyone at the centre including.
 - a. correct handwashing technique
 - b. using approved cleaning products
 - c. handles blood and other bodily fluids in accordance with the *Bodily Functions Procedure*
 - d. cleaning toys and other items that children are likely to put in their mouths
 - e. daily raking sandpits and securely covering them when not in use weekly
 - f. disposing of soiled items in a container that is inaccessible to children
 - g. actively promote handwashing and other hygiene practices with children and families.
10. Maintain up to date and accurate records of children's immunisation history
11. Ensure illness records are completed as outlined in the *Illness Policy*
12. If a child becomes unwell, isolated them from other children ensuring the child is comfortable and appropriately supervised and contact the parent to arrange collection
13. Advise pregnant staff of infectious diseases that may affect an unborn child eg. chickenpox, cytomegalovirus, and rubella (German measles)

It is recommended that the **Centre Manager / Nominated Supervisor**:

1. Request families to notify the centre if their child has or is suspected of having and infectious disease or infestation
2. Provide families with information and resources to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations
3. Ensures that all team members complete mandatory training including the module related to Infectious Diseases

4.3 Team Members will:

1. Advise their manager of a child/team member who is unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease
2. Implement appropriate health and safety procedures, when supporting and unwell child, team member or visitor
3. Contact the family or authorised emergency contact when someone is unwell or displaying symptoms of an illness or infectious disease
4. Implement and follow hygiene and infection control procedures
5. Maintain their own immunisation status, and advise the / Nominated Supervisor of any updates to their immunisation status
6. Observe the exclusion periods and not attend if they are unwell
7. Complete a Be Safe Record for any illness as soon as practicable but within four hours of the illness

It is recommended that the **Team Member**:

1. Provide learning opportunities for children to engage in hygiene practices
2. Ensure hygiene stations are stocked with the required items and are available both inside and outside for children and team members to access

4.4 Families will:

1. Provide Immunisation documentation upon enrolment and updates are made in line with the state specific requirements
2. Comply with the requirement that all children have an Australian approved immunisation document as per state specific requirements
3. Keep their children at home if they are unwell or have symptoms / been diagnosed with an infectious disease
4. Follow the exclusion periods and information provided by a medical practitioner
5. Make alternative arrangements for drop off and pick up if they are unwell
6. Provide any documentation requested by the centre regarding the management of illness and infectious diseases/conditions

5.0 Definitions

Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) is a register that is kept under Section 46b of the Health Insurance Act 1973 (Cth)

Communicable Disease is a disease that is contagious, and which can be transmitted from one source to another by infectious bacteria or viral organisms

Gastroenteritis outbreak occurs when two or more cases happen a 24-hour period

Gastroenteritis case means a person has more than two episodes of diarrhoea and/or vomiting in a 24-hour period. This does not require a medical diagnosis.

Immunisation is the process of inducing immunity to a disease in a person by giving them a vaccine specifically for that disease.

National Immunisation Program Schedule is the Schedule attached to the Australian Immunisation Handbook

Notifiable Infectious Diseases most likely seen include Chickenpox, Cryptosporidiosis, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), Hepatitis, Measles, Meningococcal, Mumps, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Pneumococcal disease, Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), Rotavirus, Rubella, Shingles, and Tuberculosis (TB) Full List can be found [here](#)

Vaccine Preventable Disease is any disease that is specified in the current National Immunisation Program Schedule

Unimmunised children are children whom the centre does not have a complete or current immunisation record on file

Vaccination is the term for the actual administration of a vaccine. If vaccination is successful, it results in immunity. Immunisation of the majority of people lowers the risk of infection for children who are too young to be immunised, or people whose immune systems did not respond to the vaccine.

6.0 Tools and Resources

<p>The most important documents I need are: Illness Policy Illness Form First Aid Policy Infectious Diseases Guardian Way page</p>	<p>Other supporting documents will include: Safe Environments Guardian Way page Health and Hygiene Guardian Way page</p>
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7.0 Additional Information

Australian Government Department of Health (2019). *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*



Australian Government Department of Health. *National Quality Standard*

Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. *National Immunisation Program Schedule*

Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. *List of Nationally Notifiable Diseases*

National Health and Medical Research Council (2019). *Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services* (5th Edition)

Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)

Public Health Regulation 2012 (NSW)

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (VIC)

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (VIC)

Safe Work Australia (2019). *Model Code of Practice: Managing the Work Environment and Facilities*

8.0 Source

Section 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
Section 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
Regulation 85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
Regulation 86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
Regulation 87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
Regulation 88	Infectious diseases
Regulation 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
Regulation 175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority

Policy owner	Chief Quality and Curriculum Officer		Content author	National Safety and Compliance Manager	
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