



November 17, 2016

Dear Child Care Provider:

Provided in this letter is information about influenza (flu) in children, including recommended prevention activities. Although infection with influenza can occur year-round, influenza viruses typically circulate from October to May. And, according to the CDC, flu activity is expected to increase in the coming weeks. It's also important to remember that children under the age of 5 years are considered to be at higher risk of complications from influenza infection. Therefore, please use the information provided below to help prevent the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses in your child care center.

What is Influenza (Flu)?

Influenza, commonly known as flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Common symptoms of flu include fever (or feeling feverish), headache, chills, muscle aches and pains, sore throat, nasal congestion, cough, fatigue, and abdominal pain. Some people with flu may also have vomiting or diarrhea.

From the time a person is exposed to flu, it can take about 1 to 4 days for that person to feel sick. Also, persons with flu can spread it to others beginning one day before symptoms occur until at least 7 days after symptoms occur.

How to Prevent Influenza

Get Vaccinated

The most important defense against influenza infection is to get an annual flu shot.

- For the current influenza season, the CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older receive a flu shot.
- Once vaccinated, it takes two weeks before the flu shot becomes effective.
- Getting your flu shot not only protects you, but it also protects others around you.
- Additional information on influenza vaccine can be found at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>

Consider encouraging influenza vaccination to your staff and attendees to reduce the risk of spread in your facility. DHEC can assist with promotional and educational information about influenza vaccination.

Implement Good Hygiene Etiquette

Good hand hygiene practices are one of the most effective ways to limit the spread of any illness.

- Ensure staff members are trained on appropriate hand hygiene practices.
- Post signage to remind staff of proper handwashing procedures.
- Sinks suitable for children should be readily available and staff should assist children with handwashing and teaching children proper procedures.
- Staff should wash hands after each diaper change.
- Staff should wash each child's hands after each diaper change.

- Encourage children not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands.
- Staff and children should wash their hands upon reentering the building from play time, handling trash, before eating, after coughing or sneezing, and after using the bathroom.
- Additional information on handwashing can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>. In addition, the following video can be used to teach staff and children about proper handwashing procedures:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iFEvkbaFh4>.

Proper respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette are also important activities to prevent further spread of illness.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your upper sleeve (if tissue is not available) when you cough or sneeze.
- Place tissue in a trash receptacle after use.
- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after coughing or sneezing.
- Additional information on cough etiquette can be found at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

Limit Contact with Others When Sick

Limiting contact with others while sick is another recommended method to prevent further transmission of influenza and other illnesses.

- Avoid close contact (i.e. within 6 feet) with ill persons.
- Stay home when experiencing influenza or influenza-like symptoms until free from fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Ensure staff or children with illness are appropriately excluded from your child care facility. Follow the guidance outlined in the School and Childcare Exclusion List, available at:
<http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/ChildTeenHealth/SchoolExclusion/>
- Ensure procedures are in place to monitor reports of illness in children and staff.
- Health checks should be conducted with children as they arrive at the facility each day; a running log of this information (e.g. history of illness) should be maintained.

Clean and Disinfect Surfaces

Routine cleaning and disinfecting can aid in removing or killing influenza viruses on surfaces.

- Follow your facility's policies for cleaning and disinfecting.
- In particular, clean frequently touched surfaces such as door knobs, tables, toys, diaper changing areas, handrails, etc.
- Cleaning these areas should be done using of an EPA-registered disinfectant.
- Additional information on cleaning and disinfecting procedures can be found at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>.

Reporting Suspected Influenza/ILI Outbreaks

Despite the best efforts, an outbreak of influenza can still occur in a child care center. Monitoring for absenteeism, parent reports of influenza, or influenza-like illness (ILI) can help in identifying potential outbreaks. ILI is defined as fever (> 100°F) with a cough and/or a sore throat with no other known cause. Listed below are guidelines for reporting suspected influenza or ILI outbreaks.

Guidelines

- 10% or more of total child care enrollment absent on a given day for reasons not otherwise specified (e.g., a child care facility with 50 children would contact DHEC when at least 5 children are absent for reasons not attributed to vacation, inclement weather, etc.).

OR

- 2 influenza-like illnesses reported in one week with at least one being laboratory confirmed (i.e. report that person tested positive for influenza by a lab test such as a rapid influenza test, culture, real-time PCR, DFA, or IFA).

If either of the above situations occur, contact your regional health department for further guidance. Contact information can be found at <http://www.scdhec.gov/Library/CR-009025.pdf>.

Additional Resources

Listed below are additional resources for your facility and parents. Please print and distribute these resources as appropriate.

1. Everyday Preventative Actions That Can Help Fight Germs, Like Flu Poster
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/everyday_preventive.pdf
2. CDC Says "Take 3" Actions to Fight the Flu
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>
3. Flu Information for Parents with Young Children
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/parents/index.htm>

Thank you for reviewing this information and for your continued assistance with providing child care in a safe and healthy environment.

Kind Regards,



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