

Flu Season Precautions for Child Care Settings

Since so many children spend most of their day in child care in North Carolina, it is vitally important that child care programs follow the child care licensing rules pertaining to health and safety during the flu season. This includes recognizing when children are too sick to be in child care, separating children who become sick in child care, and preventing the spread of illness. Child care providers must be ready to help protect the health of the children, families, and staff by taking precautions to prevent the spread of germs.

Children and staff should be excluded from child care for three reasons:

- when they have a specific infectious or contagious disease;
- when they are too sick to participate in regular activities or provide care; or
- when they have a health condition that puts them at high risk from exposure to certain illnesses.

Children should be excluded from child care when any of these symptoms are present:

- temperature of 100° F or more when taken under the arm, and 101° F or more when taken orally;
- sudden onset of diarrhea;
- two or more episodes of vomiting within a period of 12 hours; or
- strep throat.

When a child becomes sick, staff should separate the sick child from the other children and notify the sick child's parents immediately.

To help prevent the spread of germs, providers should be especially vigilant about handwashing. Both the staffs' and the children's hands should be washed upon arrival at the center and before and after these interactions: diapering or toileting; when children are fed; when any medications are given; when participating in water play activities; and when handling animals or animal cages. Children and staff should wash their hands after wiping or blowing their noses. In addition, toys and surfaces where children are diapered should be sanitized daily, and more frequently if necessary.

Child care providers who have questions about suspected flu symptoms of young children, or who need advice on health issues, may contact the NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center at 1-800-367-2229. Child care providers can also call this number to obtain information on the child care health consultant who may be available in their area to provide technical assistance.

For more information, visit the following websites:

- <http://www.flu.nc.gov/> – NC DHHS website with information on the flu and links to resources
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm> - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/index.htm> - 2014-2015 Flu Season
- <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/the-flu-seasonal-influenza-2014-2015.aspx> - Healthy Children.org (from the American Academy of Pediatrics)