

Child care facility guidelines for the prevention and management of the H1N1 flu virus.

In Ontario, the majority of confirmed cases of H1N1 flu have been reported in healthy children and young adults between five and 24 years of age. Younger children are at higher risk of being infected, presumably because of the difficulty in maintaining proper hand washing and appropriate sneezing/coughing etiquette. Child care facilities may be a key setting for transmission because of the amount of time spent in care and the close contact of social interaction.

No one knows the extent to which the H1N1 flu virus will impact our community. There will be a varying severity of symptoms. It is important to be aware of the symptoms, infection control precautions and to continue with regular daily activities.

Symptoms of H1N1 flu virus

H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory illness with symptoms similar to the regular seasonal flu. Symptoms may include but are not limited to: fever and cough, with sore throat, muscle aches, joint pains or weakness. In children under five, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea may also be present and fever may not be prominent.

Recommended infection prevention and control practices

As this time, there are no new recommendations for infection prevention and control. To reduce the spread of influenza, including seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu virus, in child care settings, routine infection prevention and control practices should be emphasized and include the following:

1) Physical layout/supplies

- Hand washing facilities should be easily accessible and provided with hot and cold running water, liquid soap and paper towels
- Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) with 60-90% alcohol, should be placed at all entrances for the use of parents, staff and visitors of the child care facility
 - Note: ABHR is not recommended for routine use with children due to the risk of accidental ingestion of the product
- Ensure safe placement and storage of ABHR by consulting with the local fire department
- During nap times, cots and cribs should be positioned with a head to foot orientation and should be distanced approximately an arm's length away from each other
- Every child care facility should have a designated area that allows a sick child to be isolated from other children until the parent(s)/guardian is available to take the child home

For further information, please call:

York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653 or visit www.york.ca

2) Hand hygiene and cough etiquette

Hand hygiene and covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing are the most important means of minimizing the transmission of influenza.

Hand hygiene is the term for cleaning hands either by using soap and running water or alcohol based hand rubs.

- Child care operators should model hand washing procedures to remind children to use consistent good hand washing techniques
- Hand washing with liquid soap and warm running water is the preferred method for cleaning hands
- At a minimum, children and child care operators should be performing hand washing following the six step hand washing procedure after coughing and sneezing into their hands, before communal activities, after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food



Poster graphics are available at www.york.ca

- In situations where hand washing facilities are not readily available (i.e. field trips) ABHR can be used as an alternative provided that hands are not visibly dirty. Children must be supervised at all times while using ABHR

Coughs and Sneezes

- Childcare operators should encourage children to cover their cough or sneeze by sneezing into their forearm/shoulder and NOT the hands, or by using a tissue to cover their cough or sneeze
- Tissues should be immediately discarded after use and hands should be washed

3) Screening

Not all respiratory illness is influenza. Seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu virus have similar symptoms. It is important to be aware of the symptoms and prevent the spread of germs.

Routine screening of children should be done when they are dropped off or enter the child care facility. If the child has flu-like symptoms, they should be sent home with their parent/guardian at this point before exposing any other children.

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Physical assessment may not be necessary, but at minimum, parents/guardians should be asked the following two questions:

- Is the child experiencing new flu-like symptoms?
If so, the child should not be allowed to attend daycare.
- If the child does not have flu-like symptoms, ask if the child has been exposed to anyone with these symptoms in the past week. If so, the child can continue to attend daycare but the parent(s)/guardian should monitor the child closely for signs of illness.

Staff should monitor children for symptoms of flu on a regular basis. Early recognition and isolation of children/staff with flu symptoms can reduce the risk of transmission to others. Staff, parents and children should be aware of the symptoms of influenza and the importance of reporting symptoms to child care administrators.

4) Education

- Parents should be provided with information about flu-like symptoms and daycare protocols if their child develops flu-like symptoms (i.e., sending child home, emergency contact information from parent(s)/guardians)
- Child care administrators should educate staff, children and parents on good hygiene practices, which includes hand hygiene, coughing/sneezing etiquette, and limiting personal close contact with other children (i.e., sharing of personal items or eating utensils)
- Child care staff should ensure that children do not share food items
- Child care facility operators should provide child care staff with training on how to monitor children for flu-like symptoms and protocols on how to manage a child/staff with flu-like symptoms

5) Environmental cleaning

Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are commonly touched by multiple children/staff such as doorknobs, faucet handles and toys.

- Clean objects, toys and commonly touched surfaces using a detergent, water and mechanical action
- Use a regular low-level disinfectant to disinfect objects, toys and commonly touched surfaces

Recipe for preparing a low level bleach and water disinfectant solution

- ▶ For low-level disinfection (1:500), use 5.25% sodium hypochlorite solution
- ▶ Mix 5 ml bleach with 2 1/2 litres water or 1 tsp bleach with 10 cups of water
- ▶ Contact time on surfaces is 10 minutes

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- When using disinfectants, follow the manufacturer's recommendations for mixing, use and contact times
- All mouthed toys must be cleaned and disinfected after each use
- Stuffed animals and plush toys that cannot be cleaned and disinfected are not recommended for use in child care facilities
- Ensure children are not sharing personal items and utensils such as pacifiers, sippy cups, feeding bottles and other eating utensils

6) Influenza-like illness (ILI) in children/staff

Recommendations for dealing with individuals with ILI are different depending on the child care facility.

- Children/staff who begin to show ILI symptoms should be separated from other children
- Children/staff with ILI should be excluded from the child care facility until they no longer have a fever and are feeling better
- While waiting to leave the child care facility, children/staff with ILI should be cared for in a designated separate area. If this is not possible, the ill person should wear a surgical mask to cover any coughing and/or sneezing or if is a young child who cannot be relied upon to keep the mask on, staff should wear the surgical mask. If a mask is not available, hold a tissue to cover the nose and mouth as a shield
- Child care facilities should have a protocol for managing children with ILI, including notification of parents/guardians who can seek medical attention if required
- A daycare that is experiencing more than 10% of children/staff ill or absent due to ILI, should be considered to have an outbreak. Public Health should be notified of any outbreaks, and may be consulted for advice at any time. Public Health should be consulted to assist with laboratory testing and to advise on control measures.

Visit www.york.ca for up-to-date information on H1N1 flu virus and other public health-related information. This link will provide you with additional links to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and with the Public Health Agency of Canada

Information can also be obtained from:

- Telehealth – 1-866-797-0000
- York Region *Health Connection* – 1-800-361-5653
- Service Ontario INFOline – 1-800-476-9708
(8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. - 7 days a week)

York Region will continue to update you as new information becomes available. Please refer to this information when providing information to parents attending your program.

Note – This information is based on the best evidence available. Currently, there is limited information on the transmissibility of the H1N1 virus and risk factors for severe illness. As more information becomes available, this information will be updated.

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