

# Sensory Play

*Sensory play tables are fun for children, but items and equipment can become easily contaminated and provide a source for pathogens to spread from one child to another. Proper cleaning, disinfection and handwashing are important ways to stop the spread of infection during sensory play activities.*

## Play dough

- Play dough must be made from non-toxic materials
- Ensure that staff and children wash their hands before and after handling the play dough
- Discard play dough at least weekly, or immediately if it is mouthed

## Sand play tables

- Sand purchased for play table should be labelled as play sand and must indicate that it is silica-free
- Ensure that staff and children wash their hands before and after using the play table
- Discard sand in play tables at least weekly
- If sand becomes wet from water, allow it to thoroughly dry before the play table is covered
- If sand becomes wet from a substance other than water, it must be immediately discarded
- When the sand from the play table is emptied, the play table must be properly cleaned and disinfected before being refilled with new sand

## Food sensory play tables

- Food products such as dry pasta or rice, must be stored in labelled containers with tight fitting lids
- Food used for sensory play should not be stored with food intended for consumption
- Ensure that staff and children wash their hands before and after using the play table



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- Discard dried food products at least weekly or immediately if they become wet or contaminated
- Wet food products such as a gelatin product (e.g., Jello®) or cooked pasta must be discarded after each use
- When a food sensory play table is emptied, properly clean and disinfect it prior to refilling

## Water play tables

- Use fresh potable water for each play session
- Ensure that staff and children wash their hands before and after using the play tables
- Empty water play tables daily. Once emptied, clean and disinfect the tables
- All toys used in the water play tables must be cleaned and disinfected at least once a day
- Keep water play tables covered when not in use
- Individual water play stations are recommended

## Garden activities

- Use a gardening soil that is safe for children (e.g., soil that does not contain manure and/or fertilizer)
- Ensure that gardening tools (e.g., gardening gloves, shovels and rakes) are made for children and properly sized for their use
- Ensure children are well supervised to prevent them from placing their hands in their mouth, touching their face or eating soil/plants
- Select plants that are not poisonous. Special care should be taken in selecting those that do not cause allergic reactions for children and staff
- Ensure children and staff wash their hands after gardening activities

## Sensory play during an outbreak

- If the child care centre is experiencing an outbreak, all communal sensory play must be terminated until the outbreak is declared over by York Region Public Health
- Any sensory play items prepared and in use prior to an outbreak being declared, must be discarded (e.g., play dough and dried food items)

For more information refer to *A Public Health Guide For Child Care Providers* at [york.ca/childcareguide](http://york.ca/childcareguide)



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