

# When is a child too sick to play?



One of the most confusing issues for child care providers and parents is determining when a child too sick to be in child care. Not all illnesses

require exclusion, but many do in order to prevent the spread of disease and to allow for the rest, recovery and treatment of children and staff. This sheet gives brief guidelines for an effective ill children policy.

## Exclude the Child When...

These guidelines are supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics

- The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably
- Staff cannot care for the sick child without interfering with the health or care of others
- The child has a confirmed communicable disease
- The child is experiencing **fever and behavior changes**
- The child has a rash accompanied by fever or behavior changes
- The child has diarrhea (not contained in diaper) at more than one changing
- The child is vomiting (twice or more in 24 hours)
- The child is experiencing uncontrolled coughing
- The child has difficulty swallowing due to throat pain.

## When to Seek Immediate Medical Help

- Temperature 101° or higher for child under 2 months, (purple, blue lips/skin)
- Breathing difficulty that prevents play, talk, crying or drinking
- Hives, welts or rash that spread quickly
- Unconsciousness
- Neck pain when child's head is moved or touched
- Seizure when there is no medical history

## Conditions that do not require Exclusion

- Common Colds, runny noses (regardless of color or amount of discharge), and coughs
- Fever without any other symptoms or behavior change. Fever is an indication of the body's response to something; it is neither a disease nor a serious problem by itself. If a child is behaving normally but has a fever, the cause of the fever should be sought but the child does not require exclusion for fever alone.
- Eye drainage without fever or behavior changes

## Preparing for Illness

- Develop or review policies and procedures for handling illnesses. (e.g. inclusion/exclusion, sanitation, hand washing, and diapering)
- Review with staff and families inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Stick to your policy.

## Talking Points with Parents

- When a child arrives, ask the family how the child is doing or feeling.
- Stress how important it is for the family to share with the child care if their child has a communicable disease.
- Share information with family if their child may have been exposed an illness at child care, and share information about the illness.



## Resources:

Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Standard for out-of-home child care 3rd Edition <http://nrckids.org>

Model Child Care Health Policies, 2004 4th Edition <http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org>

Managing Infectious Disease in Child Care and Schools: AAP [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) 800-424-2400