

Respiratory Virus Infection Control Measures for Child Care

Respiratory illnesses are caused by a variety of viruses such as [COVID-19](#), influenza ([the flu](#)) or [respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\)](#), that are spread by:

- Respiratory droplets that come out of your nose and mouth when you breathe, talk, cough or sneeze;
- Aerosols, which are tiny respiratory droplets that can stay in the air longer;
- Close contact in crowded indoor spaces;
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

Typical Symptoms of Respiratory Illness:

- Fever, cough, runny nose, congestion (nasal and/or chest)
- Generally unwell
- Behaviour changes (e.g., not able to participate in normal activities, poor feeding)
- Joint or muscle pain

Identifying and Managing Respiratory Illnesses at Child Care Centres

- Monitor absenteeism rates, and report if there is an increase.
- Follow the Halton Child Care Health Resource Manual.
- Educate staff and parents on the signs, symptoms, and ways to prevent respiratory illnesses.
- Encourage staff and parents to report symptoms when staff or a child is absent due to illness.

When a child becomes ill at a Child Care Centre

- Ensure the child is separated from others, in a separate room if possible.
- Contact parents and/or guardians to arrange for prompt pick up of the child, and to contact their health care provider, if necessary.
- Supervise symptomatic children who are separated from others.
- Clean and disinfect the isolation area once the symptomatic individual leaves the setting.

Exclusion of ill children and staff

- Children and staff with respiratory symptoms should stay home until their symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours and they have no fever. Parents of symptomatic children and staff should complete the provincial [Self-assessment tool](#) daily and follow the directions regarding isolation and masking. Please refer to the provincial document [Protection from COVID 19 and other respiratory illnesses](#) regarding isolation and additional precautions to follow upon return.
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea) can be an indication of a COVID-19 infection and may also be present in children with the flu. Children and staff with symptoms of gastroenteritis must be free of vomiting and diarrhea for at least 48 hours before returning to the Child Care Centre.
- For more information on exclusion periods related to other diagnosed illnesses, please refer to the [Periods of Exclusion for Childhood Diseases](#) on Halton.ca.

Additional Protective Measures for Consideration

- Encourage frequent hand washing and [Respiratory Etiquette](#) for children and staff.
- Follow the [PHO Fact Sheet - How to Protect Yourself and Others from Respiratory Viruses](#).
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the space, toys, and equipment regularly, using a proper disinfectant with a Drug Identification number (DIN) on the label.

- Immediate cleaning and disinfection are required when there are spills or heavy/gross contamination of surfaces by vomit or diarrhea. Refer to the Halton fact sheet: *Schools: How to Clean up Vomit or Feces*.
- Increase ventilation (e.g., open windows) and air filtration (e.g., HEPA), if possible and can be done so safely. For more information on ventilation you may refer to [PHO Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning \(HVAC\) Systems in Buildings and COVID-19](#) factsheet.
- Provide access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for staff.
- Provide PPE for staff or children who are showing symptoms of illness, or if requested, and promote a mask friendly environment.
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 and Flu vaccination.