

Illness Guidelines

Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (ECE) services

Effective 20th April 2026

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora work with ECE services to ensure safe environments and good health practices to support the health and wellbeing of children. These guidelines provide ECE services with key information on how to design your illness policy to prevent the spread of illness within your ECE. An illness policy template is also included.



Essential elements

- Regulation 46(1)(b) of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 requires all licensed early learning services to take all reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of infection among children enrolled in the service.
- Regulation 57 of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulation requires an ECE to exclude a staff member or child engaged in the service from encountering other children, where there are reasonable grounds to believe the staff member or child has an infectious or contagious disease or condition.
- For centre-based early learning services, criterion HS120 of the licensing criteria requires all practicable steps to be taken to ensure that children do not come into contact with any person (adult or child) on the premises who is suffering from a disease or condition likely to be passed onto children and likely to have a detrimental effect on them. There are specific actions to be taken for different diseases. These are set out in Schedule 1: Infectious diseases of the licensing criteria.
- If a child or staff member is unwell, they should not be attending the ECE. If they become unwell while at the ECE, isolate them immediately and arrange for them to go home as soon as possible.
- If children or staff have been vomiting and/or had diarrhoea they should not return to the ECE until 48 hours after all symptoms have stopped.

- While an ill child is waiting for parents to collect them, make them comfortable and keep them isolated (away) from other children. A staff member must remain with them at all times.
- Anyone who has had diarrhoea should not go in a swimming or paddling pool for at least two weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.
- If a child or staff member becomes unwell while at the centre, follow the advice in the [Wash Down Guidelines](#) and the [Cleaning and Sanitising Guidelines](#).



Isolation area

An isolation area is a well-ventilated, warm, quiet area where sick babies and children can be cared for away from other children, food preparation areas and sleeping areas while they wait for their parent/guardian to collect them.

It is important to isolate a sick child quickly. Urgency is required when a child has a significant fever and rash.

An isolation area should contain:

- Furniture suitable for children to lie on and that is fitted with waterproof coverings.
- Clean bedding.
- Bucket with lid for vomit or contaminated material.
- Spill kit – For guidance on what to include in a spill kit, refer to the [Cleaning and Sanitising Guidelines](#).



Regular advice reminders to parents

We recommend the following messages are included in enrolment information and brought to parents' attention regularly through newsletters, notice boards, etc:

- ✘ Parents should keep their child home when they are sick.
- ✘ Parents are expected to collect their child without delay if they become suddenly unwell.
- ✘ If children have been vomiting and/or had diarrhoea they should not attend the ECE until 48 hours after all symptoms have stopped.
- ✘ Children should not attend the ECE if advised not to by a healthcare provider or public health service.
- ✘ The ECE encourages parents to get their child vaccinated according to the current [NZ Immunisation Schedule](#).



Staff

Staff are encouraged to be vaccinated and know their vaccination status.



Developing an illness procedure

For centre-based early learning services, criterion HS121 requires ECE to have a documented procedure outlining the service's response to illness.

In developing an illness procedure, ECEs should consult with caregivers and staff around the development of the policy or if policies are already in place, discuss with caregivers about the rationale and objectives of the policy and seek their directives on how they want their child to be managed in those circumstances. An example of an what to include in your illness procedure is shown on the following page.



Health education resources

There is a wide range of health education resources that ECE services may find useful. To view and order the current resources refer to [HealthEd](http://www.healthed.govt.nz) (www.healthed.govt.nz).





Example Illness Procedure template

At [insert name of ECE] the health and wellbeing of our children, families and whānau is essential. We aim to provide children with an environment where:

- Their health is promoted.
- Their emotional well-being is nurtured.
- They are kept safe from harm.

The objective of the illness policy is to work together to make sure that our practices and decisions regarding illness are reasonable and fair. During the time your child is with us there may be occasions when they will be affected by illness. This may mean that your child will be unable to attend. Time away will allow your child to recover and will also protect the health of the other children, families and staff. We do understand that this often places parents/whānau under extra pressure.

We are guided in our decisions regarding illness by:

- Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres 2008 Regulations which require us to have a policy to take appropriate action when a child is unwell (Health and safety: Child health and wellbeing HS118 through to HS124).
- Recommendations from the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, National Public Health Service (NPHS).

Communication and consultation

We invite you to discuss any concerns you may have about your child's health and wellbeing with us at any time. If you are worried that your child may be unwell, please share this information with us when you arrive on site. This means that we can be vigilant and alert to any changes in behaviour or signs of illness, and can respond to your child's needs promptly. If we have any concerns about your child's health and wellbeing while they are in our care, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible.

Parents and teachers share the responsibility for creating a healthy centre environment, which will protect and nurture children.

Our Centre will collaborate with the National Public Health Service to seek expert advice as needed.

Staff responsibilities

- ↘ Contact parents if there are concerns about a child's health.
- ↘ Administer first aid as required.*
- ↘ Care for child in the isolation area until collected.
- ↘ Ensure children are comfortable and emotionally supported.
- ↘ If concerned that a child may be unwell, staff will keep a record of the child's day detailing any changes in behaviour, symptoms, temperature recordings, food & drink consumption, and any authorised medication given.
- ↘ Provide authorised medication, documenting time, dosage, and time of administration as per the centre-based early learning services, criterion HS28.
- ↘ Seek medical help if a child becomes more ill.
- ↘ Recommend the parents consult their healthcare provider if appropriate.
- ↘ Keep up to date with current health guidelines.
- ↘ Parent and caregivers may need to be told if a child attending the ECE develops an infectious illness. The ECE will provide information around the illness with support from the National Public Health Service (NPHS).

**Please note that Pamol/Paracetamol is not kept on these premises for general use. This medication can only be given if it has been signed for by a parent, and has been prescribed for the child for a specific illness, for a specified period of time and contains the date.*

Parent/whānau responsibilities

- ↘ Provide up to date emergency contact numbers.
- ↘ Discuss concerns about children's health with teachers.
- ↘ Let teachers know if you have given medicine to your child during the night or prior to arriving.
- ↘ Provide written authority for any medication required while the child is at the centre. Provide the name of the medicine, the dose and the time the medication is to be given.
- ↘ Collect children ASAP (within one hour) if unwell at ECE.
- ↘ Allow your child time to recover before returning to the ECE.
- ↘ If children experience vomiting or diarrhoea (three or more loose stools in one day) they should not attend the centre until at least 48 hours after all symptoms have stopped.
- ↘ If you are worried about your child's health, seek advice from your healthcare provider.
- ↘ Regulation 57 of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulation requires an ECE to exclude a child engaged in the service from encountering other children, where there are reasonable grounds to believe a child has an infectious or contagious disease or condition.

Resolution of conflict

If there is disagreement regarding the need for a child to stay away due to illnesses, our Centre will follow the advice of the National Public Health Service. This may differ from advice given by your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can discuss with NPHS and parents are also welcome to discuss with the NPHS directly.

Parents should be advised that if there is disagreement to always follow the advice of the healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment.

Induction and ongoing training

[Include information around induction training and frequency of ongoing training.]

Monitoring, evaluation and review

[State when the policy will be reviewed and who will be responsible for this.]