

Durham Region Health Department infection prevention and control measures for specific Children's Services Division operating criteria and Ministry of Education's pedagogical approach



May 2015

The Durham Region Health Department routinely inspects licensed child care facilities for infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures to ensure basic principles are followed in preventing the spread of illness.

Recently, a philosophical shift has occurred in teaching practices to support and enhance children's early learning in many more ways. The Environmental Health Division and Children's Services Division have collaborated to determine additional ways to support these new teaching practices while maintaining basic IPAC principals in preventing the spread of illness.

The following IPAC measures attempt to provide the flexibility to introduce various types of items/materials and types of play, etc. into the child care facility, and to meet operating standards of both divisions. This document is specific to the changes in practices to **absorbent/plush items**, **group sensory play**, **natural items** and item's brought in from a **child's/staff's home**. These IPAC measures were adapted to address the new/updated operating criteria in order to prevent the spread of illness. Situations in child care are often complex and may need to be assessed on an individual basis by the area Public Health Inspector.

1. Children may have access to and share **absorbent/plush items** as long as:
 - a. the facility is not in outbreak
 - b. items are removed immediately to be laundered/cleaned/discarded if contaminated with blood or body fluids e.g., mouthed, drooled on, sneezed/coughed on
 - c. absorbent/plush items are routinely laundered/cleaned/discarded weekly, at a minimum
2. Children may participate in **group sensory play** as long as:
 - a. the facility is not in outbreak
 - b. hand hygiene is practised before and after
 - c. items are removed immediately to be cleaned/discarded if contaminated with blood or body fluids e.g., mouthed, drooled on, sneezed/coughed on
 - d. sensory items are routinely cleaned /discarded weekly (exceptions may apply), at a minimum
 - e. water play must NOT be offered as group play to diapered children
3. **Natural items** (e.g. pine cones, bird's nests, sticks, stones, leaves, honeycomb) may be brought in as long as:
 - a. the facility is not in outbreak
 - b. items are not visibly contaminated and washable items are cleaned prior to use
 - c. non-washable items are enclosed in a case, plastic jar, etc. if they are suspected of being contaminated e.g., bird's nest
 - d. items from outdoor areas should be obtained away from garbage/waste, animal feces, bird droppings, chemical contamination, etc.
 - e. items are removed immediately to be discarded/cleaned if contaminated with blood or body fluids e.g., mouthed, drooled on, sneezed/coughed on
 - f. natural items are routinely discarded/cleaned weekly, at a minimum
4. Items may be brought in from **child's/staff's home** for shared use as long as:
 - a. the items are cleaned/launched by the child care staff prior to use as per the facility's policy/procedures

Important notes:

1. Sufficient staff supervision to ensure that contaminated items are not shared and are immediately removed when the child is finished with the item.
2. For infant and toddler age groups disinfection is required in addition to cleaning.
3. Ensure that safety risks have been considered for all items used by the children such as exposure to allergens, choking hazard risks, poisonous seeds, etc. Staff are expected to conduct a risk assessment to determine if items are appropriate and safe.



Environmental Help Line
1-888-777-9613 or 905-723-3818
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