



# Wee Care

## Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2021



### As we press forward...

Greetings to all our child care operators! We hope you had a good summer and were able to unwind and enjoy the warm weather. As the temperature drops, we look forward to supporting you as the Sun's rays turn to Fall days.

We commend and thank you for your efforts over these long and difficult months. You embraced change and adapted quickly while complying with changing guidelines to ensure a safe environment for your staff and the families in your care.

Below is a list of resources to help keep you organized and navigate infection prevention and control measures and operational guidelines. These resources are linked directly to webpages, so they will always be current as things change with various agencies.

[Child Care Re-Opening - Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) – Ministry of Education

[COVID-19 School and Child Care Online Screening Tool](#) – Ministry of Health (MOH) / Ministry of Education

[Before and After School Programs Kindergarten – Grade 6: Policies and Guidelines for School Boards](#) – Ministry of Education

[Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: EarlyON Reopening](#) – Ministry of Education

[Information on Child Care and the Early Years](#) – Ministry of Education

[Community Reopening Toolkit](#) – Durham Region Health Department (DRHD)

[Operating a Child Care Centre](#) – Durham Region Health Department

[Child Care Outbreak Reporting Form](#) - Durham Region Health Department

[Outbreak Control Package](#) – Durham Region Health Department

Questions? Comments? We're here to help! Contact the Durham Health Connection Line at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729.



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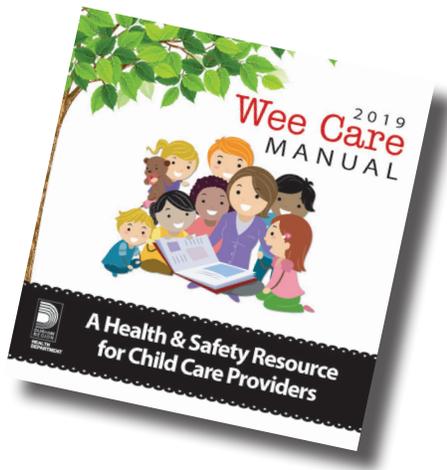
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Your Questions Answered



# Did you pick up your Wee Care manual?

This is an important reminder to all child care centres that do not have the 2019 version of the Wee Care manual: you must arrange for it to be picked up as soon as possible as our office at 101 Consumers Drive will be closing for renovations.



The manual was revised in 2019 and this date is printed on the cover of the binder and is also on the Introduction page. All child care operators were invited to pick up their copy in 2020. The manual is an educational resource provided by the Health Department to all licensed child care centres for all your centre's day-to-day needs. It contains chapters on infectious diseases, infection control, outbreak management, immunization, safe environment, healthy lifestyles, and fact sheets.

#### \*Notes:

- The manual was revised and printed before COVID-19; therefore, it does not specifically reflect COVID-19 guidance
- The Outbreak Control Package has been revised to reflect COVID-19 guidance. When you obtain your revised manual, replace the existing Outbreak Control Package with the revised version which can be found [here](#).

You can pick up your manual Monday to Friday between 8:30 am – 4:30 pm at [101 Consumers Dr. Whitby](#). Use the Visitors Entrance (off of Hopkins St.). No appointment required.

Upon arrival, please call the phone and extension posted on the door, as our office is closed to the public due to COVID.



## Durham Health Connection Line

Your access to Durham's public health services has now changed in an effort to harmonize and improve customer service through a single point of contact for all public health inquiries.

Our Durham Health Connection Line (DHCL) provides information to residents of Durham Region and beyond about health information as well as access to programs and services available through the Health Department. DHCL staff respond to inquiries from the community on a variety of health topics such as health education, counselling, referrals, connections with community supports and services, and complaints.

This harmonization has brought our divisions (Health Protection, Population Health and Oral Health) under one brand and phone number.

With recent staffing changes, please contact DHCL if you are uncertain of the public health inspector who is assigned to your centre and they will help you connect. Please contact DHCL at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729.

# Potassium Iodide (KI) tablets

Durham Region is home to two nuclear generating stations, Pickering and Darlington. The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of planning in advance for all emergencies to ensure that we are prepared and able to successfully manage and respond to such events. As emergency preparedness is at the forefront of our minds, please use this time to ensure your child care centre(s) have a supply of KI tablets **if you are located within 10 kilometres** (Detailed Planning Zone) of either the Pickering or Darlington Nuclear Generating Stations.

Potassium iodide (KI) is a salt of stable iodine and is considered an early protective measure when taken at the right time and at the right dose. The function of KI tablets is to fill the thyroid gland with stable iodine to help prevent or reduce the absorption of radioactive iodine by the thyroid. Radioactive iodine has the potential to cause thyroid cancer later in life if absorbed by the thyroid gland.

In the highly unlikely event of a serious accident where there is a release of radioactive iodine to the environment, the decision to take KI tablets will come directly from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer to Health and will be communicated through media/internet, TV, radio outlets and other available channels.

Early 2019, KI tablets were re-distributed to all child care centres located within the 10 kilometre radius of both nuclear stations by Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) as the supply was expiring in April 2019.

Only those child care centres located within a 10 kilometre radius of either nuclear stations are required to have a supply of KI tablets readily available onsite. Now is a good time for those child care centres to take an inventory of their KI tablets and ensure the following are in place:

- Know where your KI tablets are stored and ensure they are maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of tablets readily available on-site for all children and staff (for dosage requirements please go to [KI Tablets Fact Sheet Q & A](#))
- Keep a record of the quantity of tablets and the locations where the tablets are stored for each of your child care sites within the Detailed Planning Zone.
- Ensure there are written policies and procedures for administering KI tablets to the children and staff, storage of tablets, record keeping, replacing of KI tablets, auditing, and that all staff are familiar with these written policies and procedures.
- Ensure KI information letters and consent forms are distributed yearly to every parent/ guardian who has a child or children at the centre and, signed consent forms are received and kept on file.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the children whose parents/ guardians have NOT given consent to administer KI tablets in an emergency.

If your child care centre is located in the 10 kilometre radius of either nuclear station and you need more tablets or, you are a new site located in the 10 kilometre radius and did not receive a supply of KI tablets for your centre, please contact Senior Public Health Inspector Pamela Khan at [pamela.khan@durham.ca](mailto:pamela.khan@durham.ca).

For more information about KI, please contact Durham Health Connection Line at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729, or visit [preparetobesafe.ca](http://preparetobesafe.ca).

**New to Durham Region?**

Visit [preparetobesafe.ca](http://preparetobesafe.ca)

Anyone within 50-kilometres of the Pickering or Darlington nuclear stations can order a FREE supply of potassium iodide (KI) tablets.

**There is no such thing as being too prepared.**

DURHAM REGION TORONTO ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

# Updated Child Care Guidance

In September 2021 the Ministry of Education released version 8 of the Operational Guidance for Child Care During COVID -19 Outbreaks with enhanced health and safety protocols. However, there were significant updates made in the August 2021 (version 7) guidance. Please see below for updates incorporating both versions 7 and 8 of the Ministry's Operational Guidance:

## **Staffing:**

- Staff and placement students are permitted to work at multiple child care locations and between licensed age groups/cohorts
- Staff and placement students are encouraged to work at one location and one cohort if possible, especially if the centre is in outbreak

## **High Touch Surfaces:**

- Focus on regular hand hygiene to reduce the risk of infection related to high touch surfaces
- High touch surfaces are required to be cleaned and disinfected twice daily at a minimum
- It is recommended to keep a cleaning and disinfecting log

## **Shared Toys and Equipment:**

- Daily cleaning and disinfection of shared toys and equipment within a cohort are no longer required
- All toys, sensory play and natural play items will be cleaned and disinfected or discarded in accordance with the Durham Region Health Department Child Care Centre Cleaning and Disinfecting Schedule

## **Sensory Items**

- If sensory materials (e.g., playdough, water, sand, etc.) are offered, emphasis should be placed on hand hygiene before and after the use of materials



## Don't Forget...

If the centre is in an outbreak, all sensory and natural play items must be removed, and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting is required.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Staff:**

### **Masking Indoors**

- All staff, visitors and placement students are required to wear a medical mask indoors except when eating

### **Masking Outdoors**

- Masks are not required outdoors when two metres of distance is maintained from others

### **Physical Distancing:**

- Physical distancing is strongly encouraged between cohorts

### **Eye Protection**

- Eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) is required indoor and outdoor when working in close contact with children who do not wear a mask (children younger than grade 1) or children who are unable to tolerate wearing a mask
- Eye protection is not required for staff working with children that wear a mask (children grade 1 and above)

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Children:**

### **Masking Outdoors**

- Masking is not required outdoors

### **Screening:**

- All individuals entering the child care centre must self-screen everyday before attending the program using the Provincial Screening Tool
- The Ministry may request child care operators to perform daily onsite confirmation of self screening. Operators are expected to have a process in place to validate daily self screening for all individuals prior to or upon arrival

## **Transportation:**

- Staff are required to wear a medical mask at all times during transport
- Eye protection is required for the driver if physical distancing cannot be maintained and close contact is required when assisting during boarding and exiting the transport vehicle All children in grades 1 or above are required to wear a non-medical mask/face covering when on the transport vehicle
- Operators must support accommodation for children who are immunocompromised, medically vulnerable, or children with special transportation needs
- Children should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept for contact tracing purposes. Children from the same household should be seating together when possible

## **Activities:**

### **Physical Activities:**

- High contact physical activities should take place in outdoor settings only. Masks are not required outdoors for high contact physical activities
- Low contact physical activities are permitted indoors. For children in grade 1 and up, masking is encouraged but not required when physical distancing is maintained between groups and as much as possible within a group

### **Singing:**

- Singing is permitted indoors (any age group) within the cohort
- Singing indoors should only be permitted within a cohort, with masking being required and distancing between individuals



### **Field Trips:**

- Field trips are permitted as long as children remain in their cohorts throughout the duration of the trip
- Records must be maintained (i.e., name, contact information, time of arrival/departure, transportation, location visited) for contact tracing purposes

## **Space set up and physical distancing:**

- More than one child care or Early Years program or day camp can be offered per building/space as long as they are able to maintain separation between the groups/cohorts and follow all health and safety requirements that apply to those programs
- Physical barriers (which begin at the floor and reach a minimum height of 8 feet) are not required if a distance of 2 metres can be maintained between cohorts
- In shared outdoor space, mixing between groups and any other individuals outside of the group is permitted, although physical distancing is encouraged. Where physical distancing is difficult with small children, suggestions include planning activities for smaller groups when using shared objects or toys

## **Visitors:**

- Visitors (including parents, students completing educational placements, etc.) are permitted to enter the child care facilities and are subject to screening and PPE for reasons of volunteering, etc. At this time, however, parents should NOT enter the centre for child pick-ups and drop-offs.
- The number of visitors indoors are limited to always maintain physical distancing

## **Cribs:**

- Licensees and home child care providers are encouraged to increase the distance between cribs/cots/resting mats/playpens or place the children head to toe or toe to toe if the space is limited

## **Ventilation:**

- Licensees and home child care providers are encouraged to implement best practices and measures to optimize ventilation (see Public Health Ontario's guidance: Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems in Buildings and COVID-19). Adequate ventilation should be provided by opening windows, moving activities outdoors when possible, and through mechanical ventilation including HVAC systems

## **Food Provisions:**

- Child care providers should follow regular food preparation guidelines
- Family style meals are permitted, and food handlers must practice adequate food handling practices
- When possible, children should practice physical distancing while eating

# COVID-19 Immunization Disclosure Policy

In September 2021 the Ministry of Education Early Years and Child Care announced that a mandatory immunization disclosure policy is required for all child care programs.

The policy requires that licensed child care settings have a policy in place which requires staff to provide proof of one of the following three things:

1. **Full Vaccination** against COVID-19; or
2. **A medical reason** for not being vaccinated against COVID-19; or
3. Completion of a COVID-19 vaccination **educational session** prescribed by the Ministry of Education

Those who are not fully vaccinated will be required to complete a COVID-19 rapid antigen test at least two times per week as prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

**At this time, all inquiries regarding the Immunization Disclosure Policy should be directed to the Ministry of Education or your program advisor.**



# Child Care Centre Absenteeism Surveillance Program

The Child Care Centre Absenteeism Surveillance Program was developed to monitor absenteeism in the child care population in Durham Region. Child absenteeism due to illness, along with illness surveillance from other types of institutions is a useful indicator of current illness levels in the community during cold and flu season.

The data collected from these centres is reported in the Health Department's [Weekly Influenza Bulletin](#) which is posted on our web page on a weekly basis. This information helps us to monitor illnesses in our young children attending licensed child care and aids in early detection of outbreaks. This illness reporting is done through an online survey every Monday for the previous week's absenteeism. The survey is short, simple, user-friendly, and does not require log-in information: any staff can submit it.

A huge thank you to the over 100 child care centres for your participation, support and cooperation in this vital program!

By recording and analyzing the data we are able to see how illness levels change throughout the year. A timely and efficient illness surveillance system is the cornerstone of outbreak control in providing valuable data about the incidence and impact on the child care staff and children. Child care centre staff should be observing the health of each child on a daily basis to monitor for changes in a child's behaviour as an indicator of possible illness and for signs such as fever, cough, diarrhea and vomiting. Any increased levels of illness above the norm must be reported immediately to the health department.

Outbreak prevention in child care centres requires a coordinated approach by everyone involved. In an effort to promote wellness, prevent outbreaks, and reduce the impact of illness in child care centres, the Durham Region Health Department strongly encourages infection control measures such as proper hand hygiene, thorough cleaning and disinfection practices, exclusion of ill children/staff, and immunization.

As we battle the fourth wave of COVID-19, reporting illness levels from your child care centre has never been more important! It is one of the many important indicators of measuring community health in Durham Region and contributes to the [Durham's Weekly Influenza Bulletin](#).

We are counting on every centre with a preschool program to participate. **Please note, if you are a school-age program only then you do not need to participate since illness reporting is captured by the schools.**

If you are interested in participating in the child care centre absenteeism surveillance program or for further details regarding the program, please contact Pamela Khan at [pamela.khan@durham.ca](mailto:pamela.khan@durham.ca).

# Updated Screening Tool and Exclusion Requirements

The Ministry's COVID-19 [screening tool](#) for school and child care has removed runny nose, headache, congestion and conjunctivitis (pink eye) from the list of symptoms for children; diarrhea and vomiting were removed for staff/adults.

These symptoms are considered “**other symptoms**” under the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#).

Please follow the guidance below to assess what you need to do if a child or staff at your child care centre presents with these or any of the common COVID-19 symptoms on the screening tool.

## For Daily Attendance – No outbreak in the child care centre

Children/staff can attend child care with **ONLY** a runny nose: no exclusion / isolation required. They do not need to undergo one of the three requirements (COVID-19 test, alternative doctor's diagnosis, or 10-day isolation).

## For Respiratory Outbreaks:

- Children/staff with a runny nose **AND** another symptom on the screening tool (i.e., cough), must undergo one of the three requirements (COVID-19 test, alternative doctor's diagnosis, or 10-day isolation) and must be excluded until they are at least 48 hours symptom free prior to returning. They must be added on the line list. After an assessment and one of the three requirements have been fulfilled, child/staff can return to the centre if the only symptom remaining is a lingering runny nose that is not worsening.
- Children/staff with a runny nose **AND** another symptom **NOT** on the screening tool (i.e., headaches), must be excluded until they are at least 48 hours symptom free prior to returning. They may be added on the line list as directed by your public health inspector. After the 48 hours exclusion, if the only symptom remaining is a lingering runny nose that is not worsening, the child/staff can return to the centre.
- Children/staff can attend child care with **ONLY** a running nose, no exclusion/isolation required even if the child care centre is in a respiratory outbreak.

## For a COVID-19 Case and Outbreaks (with two or more positive COVID-19 cases):

Once COVID-19 has been identified in your child care centre (even one case in a room), children/staff with **ANY** symptom of illness (including runny nose only) must undergo one of the three requirements (COVID-19 test, alternative doctor's diagnosis, or 10-day isolation) and must be excluded until they are at least 48 hours symptom free prior to returning. Runny nose is still a symptom of COVID-19 and once this virus has been identified in a child care centre, all guidance for COVID-19 must be adhered to. Children/staff must be added on the line list.

If you have any questions, please contact [EHL@durham.ca](mailto:EHL@durham.ca) or Durham Health Connection Line 905-668-2020; 1-800-841-2729 and ask to speak with a Public Health Inspector.



## Your Questions Answered

Q:

**Although runny nose was removed from the list of COVID-19 symptoms on the screening tool, can a centre keep its policy to send all children home with a runny nose and they can return when it is no longer running without the need for a COVID-19 test?**

A:

Yes, a centre can have a stricter policy than the Ministry or Health Department guidance. However, the child care **cannot** say to staff or parents that it is at the direction of the DRHD since we are aligning with the MOH's screening tool at this time.

Q:

**Are parents allowed inside the child care centre to drop off/pick up their child?**

A:

Although the Ministry's guidance permits parents to enter the child care centre for drop offs/pick ups, DRHD has adopted enhanced preventative measures which recommends that parents do not enter the centre for the purpose of dropping off/picking up children as this activity is considered a non-essential visit. Child care operators should continue to escort children.

Q:

**What guidance is there for unvaccinated staff who refuse regular Rapid Antigen Testing?**

A:

Child care centres are to contact their program advisor with the Ministry of Education or consult with your Human Resources department for further guidance.

# REMINDER!

To support communication between our licensed child care centres and Durham Region Health Department, email communication has become vital. A current contact list will help us deliver information more efficiently. If your centre has had any changes to your contacts such as managers, supervisors, telephone numbers and /or email addresses, please forward this information to your area inspector or contact DHCL to update our database.



We would like to remind all child care centre owners, supervisors and staff that we welcome any suggestions that you may have for future article topics or ideas, your questions for the Q&A section of the newsletter and any comments you have to improve the newsletter!

*We welcome your ideas and suggestions!*

Please submit comments by email to [veronica.memme@durham.ca](mailto:veronica.memme@durham.ca)



**Important note:** The content in this newsletter reflects guidance current as of September 2021. With the everchanging guidance for child care settings, please consult with the Ministry of Health/Education or a Public Health Inspector for current direction.

**Please print and post this e-newsletter in a common area for those who do not have access to email.**

