



STAYING HEALTHY | 5TH EDITION | 2013

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Exclusion periods explained

Infection prevention and control in early childhood education and care services

EXCLUSION PROTECTS

Educators and staff in the early childhood education and care service your child attends work hard to limit the spread of disease and prevent illness in the care service.

Parents are sometimes asked to keep their child at home (called 'exclusion') in the event of illness or disease within the care service. The aim of exclusion is to reduce the spread of infectious diseases in the care service. The less contact there is between people who have an infectious disease and people who are at risk of catching the disease, the less chance the disease has of spreading.

This fact sheet provides you with information on why your care service may need to exclude your child from care.

WHY IS MY CHILD BEING EXCLUDED?

Education and care services understand that you are under pressure to fulfil work, study or other family commitments and may find the exclusion ruling for your child difficult to manage.

By excluding one ill child, many other children (and staff) can be protected from becoming ill. The need for exclusion and the length of time a child is excluded depends on:

- ▶ how easily the infection can spread
- ▶ how long the child is likely to be infectious
- ▶ how severe the disease can be.

Care services will not be influenced by letters from doctors stating that the child can return to care, unless the child's condition fulfils the service's criteria for returning to care.

It is the doctor's role to make the diagnosis of an illness. The care service, however, decides on the response to an illness e.g. excluding the ill child, in consultation with their local public health unit. This may also involve excluding susceptible children and staff with whom the ill child has been in contact. To make a decision on the response to the illness, care services refer to a list of recommended minimum exclusion periods.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM EXCLUSION PERIODS

NHMRC (2012) *Staying healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* provides a list of the recommended minimum exclusion periods (Table 1.1).

These are minimum exclusion periods, however a child may need to stay home for longer until he/she is well enough to return to the service.

Educators and other staff working in the education and care service are also required to follow the recommended minimum exclusion periods.



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It is a good idea to ask for a copy of the policy on exclusion periods when you join the care service.

If you have any questions or concerns about exclusion periods, talk to your care service or doctor.

IMMUNISATION

Immunisation is a reliable way to prevent certain diseases. Immunisation works by giving a person a vaccine against a particular disease. The vaccine contains a dead or modified version of the germ. This makes the person's immune system respond in a similar way to if they actually had the disease, but with less severe symptoms. If the person comes into contact with that germ in the future, their immune system can rapidly respond and prevent the person becoming ill.

The chance of an infection spreading in a community reduces if a high proportion of people are immunised, because the immunised people should not become infected and can protect more vulnerable people. This is known as 'herd immunity'.

MY CHILD IS NOT ILL, WHY IS HE/SHE BEING EXCLUDED?

He/she will be excluded from care during outbreaks of certain diseases such as measles and whooping cough (even if your child is well) if he/she has not been medically vaccinated. This includes if the child has been naturopathically or homeopathically vaccinated. The effectiveness of naturopathic or homeopathic vaccinations has not been scientifically proven.

The education and care service will usually have a policy on excluding non-medically vaccinated children in their exclusion policies.

When you enrol your child in a care service, provide the care service with a copy of your child's vaccination records. If your child has a vaccination record, make sure they have received all the vaccinations recommended for their age group.

For more information on immunisation, visit www.immunise.health.gov.au or call the Immunise Australia Program on 1800 671 811.

IMMUNISE AUSTRALIA
www.immunise.health.gov.au

IN SUMMARY

You can work with your education and care service and their exclusion policy to prevent your child, other children or staff from developing an infectious disease:

- Ask for a copy of your education and care exclusion policy.
- Provide the care service with a copy of your child's vaccination records or tell your care service if your child has not been medically vaccinated.
- Tell your care worker if your child has been diagnosed with an illness.
- Talk to your education and care service if you are unsure if your child can attend the service that day.

More information

Consumer guides are also available on

- What cause infection?
- Breaking the chain of infection

References

NHMRC (2012) *Staying healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* found at www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55.

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