

# When is a child too sick to play?

One of the most confusing issues for child care providers and parents is when is a child too sick to be in child care?



Although some illness does not require exclusion, some do to prevent spread of disease, to allow for rest, recovery and

treatment of children and staff. The following gives brief guidelines for an effective policy for ill children. A complete policy can be downloaded at [www.iu.edu/~cchealth](http://www.iu.edu/~cchealth)

## When to Exclude Children

These guidelines are supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably, or
- Staff cannot care for the sick child without interfering with the health or care of others, or
- Confirmed communicable disease, or
- **Fever and behavior changes**
- Rash, if accompanied by fever or behavior changes,
- Diarrhea (not contained in diaper) at more than one changing,
- Undiagnosed drainage from the eye,
- Vomiting (twice or more in 24 hours),
- Uncontrolled coughing, and/or
- Difficulty swallowing due to throat pain.

## When to Get Immediate Medical Help:

- Temperature 101° or higher for child under 2 months, (purple, blue lips/skin)
- Breathing difficulty that prevents play, talk, crying or drinking,
- Hives or welts that spread quickly,
- Unconsciousness,
- Neck pain when child's head is moved or touched,
- Seizure when there is no medical history,

## Conditions that do not require Exclusion:

- Common Colds, runny noses (regardless of color or amount of discharge) and coughs
- Fever without any other symptoms or behavior change. Fever is an indication of the body's response to something; it is neither a disease nor a serious problem by itself. If a child is behaving normally but has a fever, the cause of the fever should be sought but the child does not require exclusion for fever alone.

## Preparing for Illness

- Develop or review policies and procedures for handling illnesses. (e.g. inclusion/exclusion, sanitation, hand washing and diapering)
- Review with staff and families inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Stick to your policy with all children and staff.



## Talking Points with Parents

- When a child comes in the morning, ask the family how the child is doing or feeling.
- Stress how important it is for the family to share with the child care if their child has a communicable disease.
- Share information with family if their child may have been exposed an illness at child care, and share information about the illness.

**Resources:** download sample health and safety policies at [www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc/res-health.htm](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc/res-health.htm)  
Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Standard for out-of-home child care 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
<http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/index.html>  
Model Child Care Health Policies, 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Edition  
<http://www.ecelshealthychildcarepa.org/content/MHP4thEd%20Total.pdf>  
Managing Infectious Disease in Child Care and Schools: A quick reference guide. AAP  
[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) 800-424-2400

