

ISSUE DATE: 16 MARCH 2020 18:00 AEST

We hope this email finds you and your families well. The rapidly changing situation with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has raised many questions. To make sure you have a clear understanding of how we are managing the situation.

Here is a detailed overview of our actions to date and plans moving forward.

Our children, families and team members' health are our highest priority. In order to better protect families and children we are doing all we can to ensure our childcare Service remains open and operating as normal.

Children and COVID-19

The view of experts is that children are safer in childcare or school than being at home or out in the community. So far, no children have been reported as having serious complications, but that is not the case for adults, particularly older people.

Chief Medical Officer of Australia, Dr Brendan Murphy said one of the surprising features about the virus was how few children seemed to have been identified as infected.

"It's very unusual compared to influenza," he said.

"We don't know whether children might be getting the disease, but their symptoms are so mild they are not being picked up, or they're not becoming sick, or whether they are somehow less susceptible."

A brief summary of the key points:

- We are reinforcing our already strict hygiene practices and have increased the monitoring of and application of these procedures (full details below).
- All incursions and excursions are on hold.
- NOTIFY YOUR CENTRE:
 - NEW: As per current Australian Government guidance and directives any family or educator who has returned from overseas as of Monday 16 March will be required to go into isolation for 14 days.
 - EXISTING: As per current Australian Government guidance and directives, any family or educator who has recently returned from a high-risk country should self-isolate for 14 days

- DIAGNOSIS: Phone your childcare service IMMEDIATELY to notify us if you or an immediate family member has been diagnosed, or you have spent an extended period of time with another person in the community with a diagnosis.
- Please ensure that all your contact details are up to date with your service.

Cleaning and hygiene practices (pre Covid-19)

Under the National Quality Standards (NQS) we are required and adhere to strict hygiene practices. We maintain external cleaners across our Service with weekly visits by the Area Manager of the company to ensure highest quality of cleaning services.

Throughout the day Educators, Cooks and support staff are regularly cleaning rooms, doorknobs, mouthed toys, nappy change areas and continue the ongoing cycle of sanitising resources which are used by the children. Our kitchens are thoroughly audited by independent food auditors and Local Council.

The following excerpts will provide a better understanding of some of the practices we follow, and the addition of our actions during the COVID-19 outbreak;

INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

Prevention of infectious diseases is of the highest priority in our service. Our team will ensure at all times that they;

1. Clean nappy and toilet areas, tables, beds, benches, art & craft on a regular cycle as per the cleaning schedules.
2. Kitchenettes to have food grade cleaning materials available for cleaning in line with food standards.
3. Paper hand towel is used to disinfect nappy change mats.
4. Toilets and toilet areas are disinfected at least twice per day and when needed e.g. a child vomiting, miss of toilet.
5. Children's equipment is sanitised daily. Mouthed toys are removed immediately and disinfected as soon as possible. All small toys in 0-2-year-old room to be disinfected daily.

6. Outdoor equipment is cleaned thoroughly with cleaning materials every six months.
7. Tables, chairs, highchairs are cleaned with warm soapy water/cleaning material after each meal. Floors are swept after each meal. Floors are mopped daily.
8. Stretcher beds/ hanging beds are cleaned after each use, cots will be cleaned between children and once a week for five-day babies. Children will not share beds or bedding.
9. Beds are to be stored in such a way to allow ventilation. At no time will made up beds be stacked unless the sheets aren't touching.
10. Cot sheets, and cot blankets are washed weekly or as required, unless soiled will be washed straight away
11. Dummies are to be labelled, to ensure correct dummies are given to the babies. These are to be stored in individually labelled containers. Dummies on chains are to be removed from the cots to ensure that other children cannot access them.
12. Cups, plates and utensils are washed between children as per food standards.
13. Gloves are worn when wiping noses or hands are to be washed in warm soapy water.
14. Separate washers, tissues and bibs are to be used for each and every child.
15. More than two confirmed cases of an infectious illness need to be reported to the state's Health Department - the Health Department recommendations override the 'Staying Healthy in Childcare' during an outbreak.

Illness and hygiene standards are referenced through Staying Healthy in Childcare (SHCC) and/or Public Health Unit (PHU) if this exceeds SHCC ie. vomiting – PHU states 48 hours clearance, SHCC states 24 hours clearance – Our Service follows PHU).

CHILD WELLBEING AND ORAL HEALTH POLICY *excerpt;*

The team will ensure that every step is taken to minimise cross infection within the Service during the nappy change, toileting, mealtimes, routines and programmed times. We will ensure routines are

conducted in ways that maintain respect for each child, with interactions that are warm and responsive and support children's growth and learning.

Additional actions

1. Cease all incursions and excursions
2. Cease allowing non-critical visits to the Service during trading hours, gardeners, external maintenance contractors
3. Cease allowing deliveries into the Services (and/or minimise with people to people contact, items to be left outside or received by post a phone call from the delivery person
4. Providing antibacterial liquid or wipes – this is already in place however reminders have been posted on electronic communication platforms and in foyer areas
 - a. in the external at the entry gate
 - b. in the foyer
 - c. at the entry of each room
5. Wiping down all door handles
 - a. every 20 minutes during peak times
 - b. every hour during the day
 - c. external door handles on entry area (pool gate typically), front door, room doors wiped down every 20 mins
6. Increased attention to children, staff and families presenting with flu or cold-like symptoms
 - a. exclusion from the Service where exposure to COVID-19 is known or been declared a confirmed case (with the requirement for a Doctors clearance to re-attend the Service), in accordance with directions and guidance from the Australian Government
 - b. monitoring family's absences due to holidays or illness and requesting exclusion or clearances in accordance with directions and guidance from the Australian Government
7. Re-stating the importance of hand washing for children and adults – with literature communicated to all families via electronic platforms, staff to re-sit training program and intentional teaching added to programs on the importance of handwashing
8. Deep clean of Services and sanitising weekly

When should I not attend my Service?

As per the latest information as of today, 16 March 2020, based on Australian Government guidance and directives:

- **NEW** - Any Educator, Employee or Child who has recently returned from overseas midnight 16 March 2020 must self-isolate for 14 days.
- Any Educator, Employee or Child who has recently returned (in the past 14 days) from a cruise, even if only in Australian waters.
- Any child or team member who has had close contact with any person with a confirmed case of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) must not attend their early learning Service for 14 days following the exposure. Prior to returning to the Service, we will require those impacted to **obtain a medical clearance.**
- [Please click here to view the latest fact sheet for parents from the Australian Department of Health.](#)
- For further travel advice please refer to the Australian Government Department of Health website <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert#travellers-and-visitors>

When should I contact my Service?

We ask that you telephone us *immediately* if you are contacted by Public Health and advised that your child, you or another member of your household:

- Is a **confirmed** case of COVID-19
- Is being investigated as a suspected case of COVID-19 and/or is being tested for COVID-19
- Has been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Has travelled to or via a destination overseas which has a self-exclusion period. You can see the current status of different countries listed in the Australian Government links advising the Australian Government above.

Will we be closing our Service?

Our aim is to ensure our Services remain open and operating as normal. The view of experts is that children are safer in child care or school given our high quality hygiene practices.

If at any time we are instructed by the Australian Government and/or State Departments of Health and Education to close a Service, the length of the closure will depend upon the advice of the relevant government departments.



How will we communicate with you?

If we are directed to close a Service in relation to COVID-19, this is likely to happen at very short notice. In that case, we will inform you directly via email and SMS.

For this reason, **it is essential your contact details are up to date**, and that you **monitor your emails and SMS regularly throughout the day, and after hours**.

What can I do to be prepared?

The most important thing to avoid catching any virus is to wash your hands and avoid touching your face. If you're healthy, wearing a mask is not recommended according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), unless you have respiratory issues such as coughing or sneezing.

What to do if you're feeling unwell

If you have flu-like symptoms that include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, body aches, runny nose or headache, you should seek your doctor's advice.

For more information on Coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit [Australian Department of Health](#), contact the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 (in Australia) or your [local health authorities](#) for instructions on what to do.

Important information about CCS

Families receiving the Child Care Subsidy can use up to 42 absence days per child, per financial year, for any reason without requiring supporting evidence — which would cover those in self-isolation.

When the 42 days have been used, additional absences are available due to being ill from COVID-19 or self-isolation.

The CCS Helpdesk is available to assist with information. Please email the CCS Helpdesk on ccshelpdesk@dese.gov.au, send in your query via an online form or call 1300 667 276 between 9.00 am — 5.00 pm (AEDST), Monday to Friday.

We will continue to keep you updated weekly or more frequently as required, however, if you have any questions in the interim, please discuss them with me in the first instance.

Our families and team members' health are our highest priority. We appreciate your patience and co-operation as we navigate this ever-changing environment.



Kind Regards

Think Childcare.

