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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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## SICK CHILDREN POLICY

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The National Quality Standard requires early childhood education and care services to implement specific strategies to minimise the spread of infectious illness and maintain a healthy environment for all children, educators and families. We acknowledge the difficulty of keeping children at home or away from childcare when they are sick and the pressures this causes for parents, however our Service aims to minimise the transmission of infectious diseases by adhering to regulations and policies protecting the health of all children, staff, families and visitors.

*This Policy is to be read with the:*

*Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*

*Infectious Diseases Policy*

*Medical Conditions Policy*

*Administration of Authorised Medication Policy*

### Relevant Legislation and Standards

#### National Quality Standards

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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90	Medical conditions policy
92	Medication record
93	Administration of medication
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
175(2)(c)	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority- any circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or children attending the service

## Related policies

First Aid Policy

Administration of Authorised Medication Policy

Infectious Diseases Policy

Enrolment and Orientation Policy

Handwashing Policy

Immunisation and Disease Prevention Policy

Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy

Medical Conditions Policy

## Purpose

St Catherine's Early Education Centre aims to maintain the health of all children, staff and their families, ensuring a healthy environment and minimising cross contamination and the spread of infectious illnesses by implementing best practice and high standards of personal hygiene within our Service.

## Scope

This policy applies to children, families, educators, staff, visitors, approved provider, nominated supervisor and management of the Service.

## Implementation

St Catherine's Early Education Centre will provide families with up-to-date information regarding specific illnesses and ways to minimise the spread of infection within the Centre.

Our Service aims to support the family's need for childcare; however, families should understand that a child who is unwell will need one-on-one attention which places additional pressure on staff ratios and the needs of other children.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded depend on how easily the infection can spread, how long the person is likely to be infectious and how severe the disease can be.

Our Service has adopted the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) publication recommendations developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council to guide our practices to help

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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limit the spread of illness and disease. We aim to provide families with up-to-date information regarding specific illnesses and ways to minimise the spread of infection within the Service and at home.

We are guided by decisions regarding exclusion periods and notification of infectious diseases by the Australian Government- Department of Health and local public health units in our jurisdiction as per the Public Health Act. To protect the health of children and staff within the Centre, it is important that children and staff who are ill are kept away from the Centre for the recommended period.

## **Minimizing the spread of infections and diseases in early education and care services**

We understand that it can be difficult for families when their child is sick. Families may experience problems taking time off work or study to care for their child at home. Obtaining leave from work or study can contribute to negative attitudes in the workplace which can cause stress on families. Families may also experience guilt when they send their child to care who is not well.

However, it is imperative that families maintain a focus not only on the well-being of their own child but also upon the well-being of other children and our early childhood professionals at the Service. To protect the health of our children and staff within the Service, it is important that children and staff who are unwell are kept away from the Service for the recommended period and until they are feeling better.

At times, an outbreak of a new or 'novel' virus or infection, may require exclusion from the Service that is not specified in general exclusion periods for common infectious illnesses. Information, education and recommendations regarding any 'novel' virus will be provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and/or local public health unit.

The need for exclusion and the length of time a person is excluded depends on:

- how easily the infection can spread
- how long the person is likely to be infectious and
- the severity of the infectious disease or illness.

Our Educators and Staff are not medical practitioners and are not able to diagnose whether or not a child has an infectious illness. However, if an infectious illness is suspected, our Centre may ask the family to collect their child from care as soon as possible or not bring the child to care.

Management and educators *may* request families seek medical advice and provide a medical certificate stating that the child is no longer infectious prior to returning to care. **Please note it is not always possible to obtain a doctor's certificate or clearance for suspected cases of an illness.**

**The decision to approve a child's return is up to the Approved Provider/Nominated supervisor**

To help minimise the spread of illness and infectious diseases our Service implements rigorous hygiene and infection control procedures and cleaning routines including:

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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- effective hand washing hygiene
- cough and sneeze etiquette
- appropriate use of protective gloves
- exclusion of children, educators or staff when they are unwell or displaying symptoms of an infectious disease or virus
- effective environmental cleaning including toys and resources and bedding
- requesting parents and visitors to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure at the Service
- *physical distancing (when recommended by Australian Health Protection Principal Committee [AHPPC] and/or Safe Work Australia)*
- *wearing of masks when mandated by Public Health Order*
- maximising ventilation to increase air flow in learning spaces.
- Incentives for staff and educators to stay up to date with recommended immunisations eg: Flu shot, whooping cough

## **Children arriving at the Centre who are unwell**

Management will not accept a child into care if they:

- Are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention
- Have had a temperature in the last 24 hours as reported by staff or parents
- Have been given medication for a temperature (Panadol etc.)
- Have had vomiting and/or diarrhea in the last 48 hours
- Have been started anti-biotics in the last 24 hours

## **Children who become ill or arrive ill at the Centre**

Children may become unwell throughout the day, in which Management and Educators will respond to children's individual symptoms of illness and provide immediate comfort and care.

- **If we believe your child can not participate in the program as they would normally, eg' lethargic/ crying/ needing one on one care. We will call you to pick up your child immediately. If you do not respond will go through your contact list to seek another person to pick up. Your child will need to be picked up within 30 minute of the call.**
- For infants under three months old with a temperature/fever over 38°C, parents will be immediately notified and requested to seek medical assistance. If the parent cannot take the child to a GP immediately, permission will be required for the Service to seek medical assistance urgently
- Educators will closely monitor and document the child's symptoms in an illness report
- Children who are unwell at the Service will be able to rest in a supervised area away from other children until parents or the emergency contact person is able to collect them
- A child who has passed two runny stools/vomited whilst at the Centre will be sent home and may only return 48 hours after the symptoms have passed.

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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- During an outbreak of an infectious disease, Parents will be notified if their child has 1 or more symptoms immediately. **(During this period, we do not give the benefit of doubt, we will send your child home as soon as 1 symptom appears)**
- Educators will take the child's temperature. If the child's temperature is 38°C or higher, **(37.5°C, effective during a pandemic or outbreak of an infectious disease)**
- educators will contact the child's parents/guardian/emergency contacts as soon as possible to have the child picked up and if necessary, provide verbal authorisation to administer paracetamol.
- Educators will attempt to lower the child's temperature by
  - Removing excessive clothes (shoes, socks, jumper, pants)
  - Offering water to drink/sip
  - Applying a cool (but not cold) washer behind their neck and on their forehead
  - Moving child to a quiet area where they can rest whilst being supervised and comforted.
- Educators will continue to document any progressing symptoms
- Educators will complete an Illness Record, ensuring the form has been completed correctly and signed by the parent/guardian/emergency contact and management.
- Educators will check that written parental permission to administer paracetamol has been provided in the child's enrolment form.
- Educators will thoroughly clean and disinfect any toys, resources or equipment that may be contaminated by a sick child

## **If an infectious disease arises at the Centre, we will respond to any symptoms in the following manner -**

- Isolate the child from other children, where they can rest whilst being comforted and supervised by an educator.
- Ensure the child is comfortable.
- Contact the child's parents or nominated emergency contact. If the child's parents are unavailable, we will contact the next nominated individual. We will inform the contact of the child's condition and ask for a parent or other authorised individual to pick the child up as quickly as possible. Any individual picking the child up from the Centre must be approved by the child's parents and be able to show identification.
- During an outbreak of an infectious disease, Parents will be notified if their child has 1 or more symptoms immediately. **(During this period, we do not give the benefit of doubt, we will send your child home as soon as 1 symptom appears)**

## **Reporting Outbreaks to the Public Health Unit REG.175(2) (C)**

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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The approved providers or nominated supervisors must inform the parents and the Department of Health within 24 hours of forming the belief that a child is suffering from

- Diphtheria
- Mumps
- Poliomyelitis
- Hemophilus influenzae Type b (Hib)
- Meningococcal disease
- Rubella ("German measles")
- Measles
- Pertussis ("whooping cough")
- Tetanus
- An outbreak of gastrointestinal or respiratory illness

Management will closely monitor health alerts and guidelines from Public Health Units and the Australian Government- Department of Health for any advice and emergency health management in the event of a contagious illness outbreak.

Outbreaks of communicable diseases represent a threat to public health. To prevent outbreaks, it is important to monitor the number of people who contract certain infectious diseases and their characteristics, and to work with patients and their doctors to help prevent spread to other people.

All information is held confidentially in order to protect the patient's privacy. Both the NSW and Commonwealth Privacy Acts contemplate the release/disclosure of patient information where it is lawfully required or authorised.

## **Common Colds and Flu**

The common cold (Viral upper respiratory tract infections) is very common in children, occurring 6-10 times a year on average with the highest number usually being during the first 2 years in child care, kindergarten or school. Symptoms may include coughing, runny nose and a slight temperature.

In circumstances where a child appears to have a cold or flu symptoms, management will determine if the child is well enough to continue at the Centre or if the child requires parental care. As cold and flu symptoms are very similar to COVID-19, children with these symptoms may be required to obtain a RAT or PCR test.

**Our Service aims to support the family's need for childcare, however families should understand that a child who is unwell will need one-on-one attention which places additional pressure on staff ratios and the needs of other children. Group care is different from home care.**

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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Children who are generally healthy will recover from a common cold in a few days. Keeping a child home and away from childcare helps to prevent the spread of germs.

Influenza is a highly contagious illness and can spread to others for 24 hours before symptoms start. To prevent the spread of influenza our service encourages staff and children to be vaccinated once a year.

## Excluding Children from the Centre

- When a child has been diagnosed with an illness or infectious disease, the Centre will refer to *Staying Healthy in Childcare* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) to find the recommended exclusion.
- When an infectious disease has been diagnosed, the Centre will display appropriate documentation and alerts for families including information on the illness/disease, symptoms, infectious period and the exclusion period. (This information can be obtained from *Staying Healthy in Child Care* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition)
- Children that have had diarrhea and vomiting will be asked to stay away from the Centre for at least 48 hours after symptoms have ceased to reduce infection transmission as symptoms can develop again after 24 hours in many instances.

## Notifying Families and Emergency Contact

- It is a requirement of the Centre that all emergency contacts are able to pick up an ill child within a timely manner, ideally within a 30-minute timeframe.
- In the incident where the ill child is not collected in a timely manner or should parents refuse to collect the child a warning letter will be sent to the families outlining Service policies and requirements. The letter of warning will specify that if there is a future breach of this nature, the child's position may be terminated.

## Management and Educators will ensure

- effective hygiene policies and procedures are adhered to at all times to prevent the spread of illnesses
- they promote effective hand hygiene and cough etiquette
- effective environmental cleaning policies and procedures are adhered to all times
- all families are provided access to relevant policies upon enrolment which will be explained by management including *Control of Infectious Diseases Policy, Sick Children Policy, Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy, Handwashing Policy and Medical Conditions Policy.*
- families are provided with relevant information from a trusted source about preventing the spread of illnesses
- that any child who registers a temperature of 38°C or above is collected from the Service and excluded for 48 hours after the last elevated temperature.

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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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- a child who has not been immunised will be excluded from the Service if a vaccine preventable disease is reported within the Service community and that child is deemed to be in danger of contracting the illness. Please refer to our *Control of Infectious Diseases Policy*.
- families of a child with complex and chronic medical conditions will be notified in the event of an outbreak of an illness or infectious disease that could compromise their health
- families are notified to collect their child if they have vomited or had diarrhea whilst at the Service.
- Families are notified if their child is unwell, miserable and unable to participate in daily activities.
- notification is made to the Regulatory Authorities within 24 hours of any incident involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child while being educated and cared for by an Education and Care Service, which:
  - (i) a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner *or*
  - (ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital. For example: whooping cough, broken limb and anaphylaxis reaction
- any incident or emergency where the attendance of emergency services at the Education and Care Service premises was sought, or ought reasonably to have been sought (eg: severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis)
- parents or guardians are notified as soon as practicable and no later than 24 hours of the illness, accident, or trauma occurring.

## **Families Responsibility**

In order to prevent the spread of disease, families are required to monitor their child's health and not allow them to attend childcare if they have an infectious illness or display symptoms of an illness.

For children who have ongoing medical needs such as asthma or anaphylaxis, parents should regularly review their child's health care action plans to ensure educators and other staff are able to manage their individual needs as required.

Families should implement effective hygiene routines at home such as regular handwashing and sneeze and cough routines (use of tissues, covering their mouth with coughing, sneezing into a tissue or elbow).

Families should notify the Service if their child has been unwell in the past 24 hours or someone in the family is/has been sick.

Signs of illness in young children may include:

- runny, green nasal discharge



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# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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- high temperature
- diarrhoea
- red, swollen or discharging eyes (bacterial conjunctivitis)
- vomiting
- rashes (red/purple)
- irritability, unusually tired or lethargic
- drowsiness
- poor circulation
- poor feeding
- poor urine output
- a stiff neck or sensitivity to light
- pain
- mouth sores that cause drooling
- impetigo

Parents should seek medical attention should their child (or other family members) develop symptoms such as:

- high fever
- uncontrolled coughing or breathing difficulties

### **Returning to care after surgery, injury or long term illness**

Children who have undergone any type of surgery will need to take advice from their doctor/surgeon as to when it is appropriate to return to care.

If we believe your child can not participate in the program as they would normally, eg' lethargic/ crying/ needing one on one care. We would not be in a position to allow your child to attend.

**Please note: it is not always possible to obtain a doctor's certificate or clearance for suspected cases of an illness. The decision to approve a child's return is up to the Approved Provider/Nominated supervisor**

### **Source**

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Government Department of Education, *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. (2009).

Australian Government- Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/>

# ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

Australian Government Department of Health Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).  
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).  
 Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2020)  
 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>  
 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012) (updated June 2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.  
 NSW Public Health Unit: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/pages/phus.aspx>  
 NSW Health Symptoms and testing COVID-19 <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/symptoms-and-testing>  
 Public Health Act 2010  
 Raising Children Network: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/fever>  
 Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).  
 The Sydney Children's Hospitals network (2020).  
<https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/search/site?query=fever>  
 Safe Work Australia  
 Victoria Department of Education and Training (2020).  
<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-education-and-care>

## Review

The policy will be reviewed regularly.

The review will be conducted by:

- Management
- Employees
- Families
- Interested Parties

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
August 2017	This policy was implemented in August 2017	June 2019
August 2018	Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard. Expanded the 'Families Responsibilities' section	June 2020
Oct 2020	Temperature range to indicate fever changed to 37.5° Celsius or above for screening. Temperature screening guidance added to align with COVID-19 recommendations (Victoria DET)	June 2022
June 2022	Remove close contact with someone who has a positive confirmed case of COVID-19 Request for families to undertake RAT self-test if child is symptomatic for COVID-19 Updated responsibilities for parents and management Checked and updated regulations and sources	Oct 2024

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## ST. CATHERINE'S EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

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<b>Dec 2023</b>	Remove doctors clearances Removed 24-hour exclusion periods Added 48-hour exclusion periods	NOV 2024
<b>Nov 2024</b>	Information related to Covid 19 was removed. Notification of Covid 19 to regulatory authority removed. Sources have been checked and updated Additional regulations have been added	Nov 2026