COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Settings

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a novel coronavirus that can result in acute respiratory illness. In general, these viruses are spread when a sick person coughs or sneezes. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. The majority of people with COVID-19 develop a mild illness, which may include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Children may have milder or asymptomatic infections of COVID-19, and the virus may still be transmitted to other people. For more general information about COVID-19, visit www.toronto.ca/COVID19.

The Government of Ontario has ordered licenced child care centres to be closed until further notice. On March 22, 2020, the Province announced that some child care centres will be opened to enable health care and other frontline workers to access safe, local emergency child care. The following are interim recommendations to help reduce the risk of acute respiratory illness, including COVID-19, in these settings.

Infection prevention and control measures to help reduce the risk of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, are as follows:

- **Conduct screening to limit the introduction of infection to the facility:**
  - All staff/parents/caregivers should be aware of signs and symptoms of COVID-19, including:
    - fever (equal or greater than 38 degrees Celsius)
    - cough
    - muscle aches and tiredness
    - difficulty breathing
    - and less commonly: sore throat, headache, diarrhea
  - Passive screening:
    - Parents/guardians should be instructed to check their child's temperature daily. Staff should be instructed to check their own temperature daily.
    - Staff/children with any of the above signs and symptoms should stay home and not attend the facility for 14 days from symptom onset and no longer feeling unwell.
    - Visit our [website](https://www.toronto.ca) to learn about assessment centres and to help determine if further care is required.
  - Active screening:
    - Designate an area near the main entrance to conduct the screening. The area should allow a minimum of two metres (six feet) distance between staff conducting screening and the person being screened.
    - Post signage in visible areas which clearly explains the screening process and the rules and conditions for entry (see example [COVID-19 Screening Sign](https://www.toronto.ca)).
    - Actively screen staff and parents/caregivers prior to entry/drop-off by asking about the following:
Do you/the child or any member of your household have any of the following symptoms: fever/feverish, new or existing cough, sore throat, or difficulty breathing?

Have you/the child travelled outside of Canada, including the United States, within the last 14 days?

Have you/the child had close contact with a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case?

Have you/the child had close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been outside Canada, including the United States, in the last 14 days?

- Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer available at the screening stations for people who have answered NO to all questions for use prior to entry into the facility.
- Staff/parents/caregivers who answer YES to any of the question should not be permitted to enter the facility.
- Visit our website to learn about assessment centres, and to help determine if further care is required.

- Suspend visitors to the facility.
- Unlicensed child care programs operating from a home should suspend services if a household member becomes ill with a respiratory infection or is diagnosed with COVID-19.

- Practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
  - Wash hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.
  - If soap and water are not available use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer provided hands are not visibly soiled.
  - Provide additional hand sanitizer stations (e.g., wall mounted hand sanitizer dispensers) in supervised areas.
  - Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
  - If you don’t have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
  - Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Operators should monitor hand hygiene supplies to ensure adequate amounts of liquid soap, paper towel, hand sanitizer, tissues, and waste receptacles lined with plastic bags.

- Enhance environmental cleaning and disinfecting schedules:
  - Cleaning refers to the removal of dirt and organic material from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill or deactivate germs.
  - Disinfection works by using chemicals to kill/deactivate germs on surfaces. This process does not work effectively if surfaces are not cleaned first.
  - High-touch surfaces and items in common areas (e.g. tables, chairs, toys, indoor/outdoor play equipment, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, sinks, electronic devices) must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily, when visibly dirty, and after contact with body fluids (e.g. saliva).
  - Disinfect cots and cribs after each use. Linens must be laundered between children.
  - Low-touch surfaces (e.g. floors, wall, and windowsills) must be cleaned and disinfected as needed.
  - Disinfectants should have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada. Alternatively, chlorine bleach solutions, may be used for disinfection.
  - Check the expiry date of products you use, and always follow manufacturer's instructions.
Reduce the risk of transmission during activities:

- Practice physical distancing as best as possible to maintain a two metre (six feet) distance between staff and children.
- Suspend sensory play activities.
- Reinforce "no sharing" policies and procedures. This includes the current practice of not sharing food, water bottles or personal items and belongings. Personal items should be clearly labelled with each child's name.
- Suspend activities that permit the mixing of children from different care groups.
- Include individual activities to increase space between children.
- Stagger mealtimes.
- Stagger use of playgrounds and play spaces (dedicated to the licensed child care) by different care groups to prevent over-crowding. Do not use community playgrounds.
- Supervise and ensure that children practice hand hygiene frequently while using dedicated playgrounds and after using playground equipment.
- Maintain a 2-metre distance between cots/nap mats and cribs. If space is restricted place children head-to-toe or toe-to-toe.

Isolate children and staff that become ill with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 while attending the facility:

- Staff who become ill while at the facility should be sent home immediately, and directed to our website for more information about COVID-19.
- Place the child with symptoms in a designated room and supervise the area until they are picked up or are able to go home.
  - Notify parents/caregivers or emergency contacts to pick up sick children as soon as possible.
  - The designated room should have a handwashing sink or alcohol-based hand sanitizer available.
  - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area if possible.
  - Children should wear a mask if they are able to use the mask properly (e.g. donning and doffing carefully, avoiding touching while on). If the child can wear a mask, and physical distancing can be maintained, then staff do not require personal protective equipment.
  - If physical distancing cannot be maintained (e.g. providing direct care to an infant or toddler), staff should wear mask and gloves.
  - Clean and disinfect the area immediately after the child with symptoms has been sent home.
  - Contact Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 to notify them of the potential case and seek input regarding the information that should be shared with other parents of the child care centre.
- Staff and children who were exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 or a child with symptoms should be excluded from the child care setting for 14 days.
  - These staff should also self-monitor for symptoms for the next 14 days. They should be advised to avoid being in contact with vulnerable persons or settings where there are vulnerable persons (e.g. long-term care homes). They must not work in other child care settings.
- Staff/children who are being managed by Toronto Public Health (TPH) (e.g. confirmed cases of COVID-19, household contacts of cases) should follow instructions from TPH to determine when to return to the facility. Staff should also report to their Occupational Health and Safety department prior to return to work.
• Provide support and reassurance
  o Being a positive role model is an effective strategy to help reduce fear and anxiety as well as promoting healthy behaviours. Remember that children are often listening when you talk to others about COVID-19.
  o Maintain familiar routines and activities to reinforce a sense of security.
  o Acknowledge concerns and provide reassurance about personal safety and health.
  o Refer parents/caregivers to our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 for the most up-to-date information.
  o Help identify when sources of misinformation are circulating and correct this information when it occurs.
  o Further guidance is available from the World Health Organization to help children cope with stress.

More information
For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References


