

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Guidance for Home Child Care Providers Going into Essential Workers Homes

Keeping you and the children you care for healthy and safe during a pandemic

April 16, 2020

Essential workers include frontline health care providers, emergency or first responders (police, firefighters, paramedics) as well as others who provide essential goods and service (i.e. grocers or pharmacy workers). Parents who are essential workers may need child care to be able to go to work and perform essential service in our community.

In place of establishing an emergency child care centre, Southwestern Public Health is permitting essential workers to obtain child care/child minding within their own homes. They may work with other essential worker families with no more than 5 children in one household for the provision of home child care. It is expected that essential workers will reimburse home child care providers upon mutual agreement at their own expense.

These guidelines are intended for home child care providers to ensure the health and safety of the children they care for and themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to follow current infection prevention and control practices to minimize the risk and spread of infection to others.

What you should do:

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water is not available.
- Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue and put dirty tissue in the garbage. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid getting close to faces of all children where possible.

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Healthy Hand Hygiene Behavior

- All child care providers should engage in hand hygiene at the following times:
 - Before arriving at the essential worker's home
 - Before and after preparing food or drinks, eating or feeding children
 - Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
 - After diapering
 - After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom
 - After coming in contact with bodily fluid
 - After handling animals or cleaning up animal waste
 - After playing outdoors or in sand
 - After handling garbage
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available.
- Supervise children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent ingestion.
- Assist children with handwashing, including infants who cannot wash hands alone. Child care providers should also wash their own hands afterwards.

Clean and Disinfect

- Routinely clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially toys and games. Health Canada recommends cleaning high-touch surfaces often, using either regular household cleaners or diluted bleach. This bleach solution should be prepared according to the instructions on the label or in a ratio of 1 teaspoon (5 mL) per cup (250 mL). Directions are based on bleach that is 5% sodium hypochlorite, to give a 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution.
- Public Health Ontario recommends cleaning and disinfecting surfaces frequently touched by hands twice per day or when visibly dirty. This may include cleaning surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily such as doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, toilet handles, countertops, toilet training potties, and desks. Refer to Public Health Ontario's guidance on [Cleaning and Disinfection in Public Settings](#).
- Use the cleaners available at the essential workers' home. Ensure you are aware of where the cleaning products are stored and how to use them properly.

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- Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
- Disposable wipes or other cleaning products should be made available for child care providers so that commonly used surfaces such as toys, games, remote controls and other frequently touched objects can be cleaned before/after use.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for concentration, application method, and contact time for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- All cleaning materials should be kept secure and out of reach of children.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and child care providers should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children from inhaling toxic fumes.

Clean and Sanitize Toys

- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used (i.e. plush toys).
- Toys that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion should be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize with a disinfectant, and air-dry.
- Be mindful of items more likely to be placed in a child's mouth, like play food, dishes, and utensils.
- Machine washable cloth toys should only be used by one individual at a time or should not be used at all. These toys should be laundered before being used by another child.
- Set aside toys that need to be cleaned. Place in a dish pan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for "soiled toys." Keep dish pan and water out of reach from children to prevent risk of drowning. Washing with soapy water is the ideal method for cleaning. Try to have enough toys so that the toys can be rotated through cleanings.
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered as a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

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Caring for Infants and Toddlers

- Diapering
 - When diapering a child, wash your hands and wash the child's hands before you begin, and wear gloves, if possible. Follow safe diaper changing procedures. Steps include:
 - Prepare (includes putting on gloves)
 - Clean child and remove gloves
 - Remove trash (including gloves)
 - Replace diaper
 - Wash child's hands
 - Clean up diapering station
 - Wash hands
 - After diapering, wash your hands (even if you were wearing gloves) and disinfect the diapering area with a fragrance-free bleach as a sanitizing or disinfecting solution. If the surface is dirty, it should be cleaned with detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- It is important to comfort crying, sad, and/or anxious infants and toddlers, and they often need to be held. When washing, feeding, or holding very young children:
 - Child care providers can protect themselves by wearing an over-large button-down, long sleeved shirt and by wearing long hair up off the collar in a ponytail or other updo.
 - Child care providers should wash their hands, neck, and anywhere touched by a child's secretions.
 - Child care providers should change the child's clothes if secretions are on the child's clothes. They should change the button-down shirt, if there are secretions on it, and wash their hands again.
 - Contaminated clothes should be placed in a plastic bag or washed in a washing machine. Infants, toddlers, and their providers should have multiple changes of clothes on hand in the home-based child care.

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Food Preparation & Eating Well

- Caregivers should ensure children wash hands prior to eating.
- Caregivers should wash their hands before preparing food and after helping children to eat.
- If meals are typically served family-style, plate each child's meal to serve it so that multiple children are not using the same serving utensils.
- Sinks used for food preparation (in the kitchen) should not be used for any other purposes.
- Try to follow [Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating](#) as much as possible.

Emergency Orders and Outdoor Play

Stay informed about emergency orders from the [Province of Ontario](#) and respect them. Do not visit playgrounds, splashpads, sporting fields or other outdoor recreational areas with children if an emergency order mandating their closure is in effect. Alternatively, play outside in the backyard (if able), go for a walk or a bike ride while maintaining safe [physical distancing](#) (2 meters from other people).

In-Home Child Care/Minding Candidates

In an ideal scenario, home child care providers have completed a certified babysitters course, are certified with first aid and CPR and/or have experience with child minding. Ask for a reference if you would like confirmation of course completion or experience.

Young adults who have experience with babysitting, child minding or camp counselling are ideal candidates to provide home child care for essential workers. Those who have a background in early childhood education or teaching are also ideal candidates. Older adults over the age of 65-70 and those with underlying medical conditions are not suitable candidates as they are at increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

All in home child care providers should be up to date on their routine [immunizations](#) and complete the Ministry of Health's [self-assessment tool](#) each day prior to entering an essential workers' home to ensure they are healthy enough to provide home child care. While [physical distancing](#) is recommended for the general public, it is recognized that adhering to a 2-meter distance between yourself (the provider) and the child/children may not be feasible when providing in home child care. New research suggests that [homemade masks](#) may help prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading inadvertently to

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others. Therefore, consider wearing a homemade mask as a precaution if in close contact with children. This will serve as an additional measure to prevent your respiratory droplets from coming into contact with the children and surfaces in the home and may prevent the virus from spreading *before* symptoms develop (otherwise known as presymptomatic transmission). Discuss the parent's wishes prior to providing care.

It is ultimately up to the parent/essential worker who they choose to provide child care.

If a Child Becomes Ill with Possible Symptoms of COVID-19

1. Children who develop possible symptoms of COVID-19 (such as a fever or cough, difficulty breathing or other illnesses) while in your care should be separated from other children or siblings in a supervised area until the parent/essential worker arrives home.
2. Call the parent to notify him or her of the symptom(s) their child has developed.
3. Call Southwestern Public Health Covid-19 Call Centre at 1-800-922-0096 ext. 9 or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 to obtain medical advice and next steps.

Adapted from the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#clean> and the Ontario Ministry of Health Guidance for Emergency Child Care Centres.

For official COVID-19 information visit: www.swpublichealth.ca