

If Your Child is Not Feeling Well

- ▶ *This template can be customized and used as an announcement via e-mail, Web site, program newsletter, or other creative ways to reach parents and program staff.*
- ▶ *Coordinate efforts with your local health department before distributing this letter or e-mail communication to ensure that all information is timely, relevant, and accurate.*

If your child is not feeling well ...

- ▶ **Watch carefully for signs and symptoms of flu.** Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can delay your response to their illness. Symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1 flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

A fever is a temperature measured by mouth with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, signs and symptoms that may indicate your child has a fever include chills, feeling very warm to the touch, having a flushed appearance, or sweating.

- ▶ **Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention.** These warning signs include one or more of the following:
 - fast breathing, trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or no longer breathing;
 - bluish, purplish, or gray skin color especially around the lips and the inside of the mouth, or around the nails;
 - not drinking enough fluids, refusing to drink;
 - not urinating, decreased number of wet diapers, or no tears when crying;
 - severe or persistent vomiting;
 - not waking up or not interacting (e.g., unusually quiet and inactive, no interest in playing, no interest in favorite toy);
 - being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, or cannot be consoled;
 - pain or pressure in the chest or stomach;
 - sudden dizziness;
 - confusion; and
 - flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- ▶ **Stay home if you or your child is sick with the flu** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Children and teenagers should not be given aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid); this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- ▶ **Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks) to prevent dehydration. For infants, use electrolyte beverages such as Pedialyte®.
- ▶ **Contact your health care provider immediately if a child younger than 5 years of age is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your health care provider will tell you what special care is needed for your child.

To protect other family members ...

- ▶ **Get your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu according to CDC recommendations.
- ▶ Have your child **cough and sneeze into a tissue** or into his or her elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available. Make sure your child throws tissues away right after use.
- ▶ **Make sure your child's hands are washed often, and especially after coughing or sneezing.** Help your younger child wash them for 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ▶ **Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches** with his or her hands, mouth, or body fluids. Wipe these surfaces with a household disinfectant that is usually used, following the directions on the product label. Additional disinfection of these surfaces beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.

For more information about flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.flu.gov.

Steps the Child Care or Early Childhood Program is Taking Now

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Steps the Program is Taking Now

At this time, program staff and children who are NOT sick can safely come to the early childhood program. We are working closely with the [county/city] health department and will keep you updated with any important information regarding the current flu conditions.

The following steps are being taken at our program to help keep children and staff from getting sick with flu.

- ▶ ***Encouraging our staff to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu*** (if recommended).
- ▶ ***Encouraging parents to have children (6 months of age and older) vaccinated*** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu. Children under the age of 5 years are at higher risk for flu complications.
- ▶ ***Child care providers are educated and encouraged to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze***, and are teaching children how to do the same.
- ▶ ***Child care providers are practicing good hand hygiene*** and we are providing the time and supplies for staff and children to wash their hands as often as necessary. Our staff is actively helping children wash their hands frequently.
- ▶ ***We are performing a daily health check of children and staff when they arrive at the child care program.*** Please make sure your contact information is up-to-date so we can contact you to pick up your child if he or she becomes sick.
- ▶ ***If children or staff have flu-like symptoms, they are kept in a separate, but supervised, space*** until they can go home. We are also limiting the number of staff who takes care of sick children.
- ▶ ***We are asking parents and staff to keep themselves and children home if they have flu-like illness.*** They should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius measured by mouth), or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, a flushed appearance, or sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- ▶ ***We are frequently cleaning surfaces and items*** that children touch with their hands, mouths, and body fluids such as toys, diaper stations, chairs, or playground equipment.
- ▶ ***We may decide to temporarily close the program if there is a lot of flu in the community.*** Please consider alternate child care arrangements in case we need to close temporarily. Check with your employer to find out if they will allow you to stay at home to care for your children. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, start planning for other ways to care for your children at home.

If the flu conditions become ***MORE*** severe, we will consider adding the following steps:

- ▶ ***Extending the time sick children or child care providers stay home*** to at least 7 days, even if they feel better. Those who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.
- ▶ ***Allowing children and staff at higher risk for flu complications to stay home.*** Parents and staff should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider.
- ▶ ***Finding ways to increase social distances*** (the space between people) in our program by dividing classes into smaller groups, moving play stations farther apart, and holding classes outdoors, weather permitting.
- ▶ ***Considering temporarily closing the program*** if we are unable to continue to operate because many staff and children are at home or if CDC or our health department asks us to close to help decrease the spread of flu in our community.

For additional information about flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.flu.gov.

Child Care or Early Childhood Program is Suspended

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[Child care or the early childhood program] at [name of program] has been suspended as a result of severe flu in the area. Children and staff should not report to the program.

We have been working closely with the [county/city] health department to determine the current flu conditions in our community. The program will be closed for [5-7] days to reduce the risk of children and early childhood providers getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

- ▶ *Early childhood program closure is likely to decrease the spread of flu when used early when the flu appears in the community and when used together with other strategies.*
- ▶ *Parents should find out if their employer will allow them to stay at home to care for children whose child care or early childhood programs have closed. Ask if you can work from home.*
- ▶ *Find other ways to care for your children at home. Try to develop safe backup child care arrangements with neighbors, friends, co-workers, or church groups. These should consist of small groups of children (for example, groups of 6 or fewer children) and have a stable early childhood provider.*

We will provide updates on the closure of [name of program]. Call [phone number] or visit our Web site [if program has a Web site, insert Web address] for more information.

For more information about the flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.flu.gov.

Child Care or Early Childhood Program has Re-Opened

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[Name of program] services will resume on [date].

Even though children and staff can return to the facility, the flu is still spreading in the community and you can take important steps to continue to help slow the spread of flu.

- ▶ ***Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.*** If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands. Teach your children how to do this.
- ▶ ***Continue to wash your hands often with soap and water,*** especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand rubs can also be used. Parents and child care providers should wash the hands of children who cannot yet wash themselves, and closely monitor children who have not yet mastered proper hand hygiene.
- ▶ ***If a child or member of the program staff is sick they should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever*** (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius measured by mouth), or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, a flushed appearance, or sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). *[This bullet may need to be adapted if decisions are made with your local public health officials to extend the amount of time that sick people stay home.]*

Our program will continue to conduct daily health checks of children and staff and will send sick children and staff home.

For program updates, call [phone number], or visit our Web site at [web address].

For more information about the flu, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.flu.gov.