

Hygiene at early learning services

Encouraging good hygiene in early learning services helps children to develop lifelong positive hygiene habits, and also helps reduce the risk of cross infection between children and adults.

In an early childhood education and care service you should be able to see standards of hygiene used by the educators to minimise the spread of infection. You can also help services maintain a hygienic environment.

Why is good hygiene important?

Infection can be spread through direct physical contact between people, airborne droplets from coughing and sneezing or from contact with surfaces and objects. Children in child care come into contact with many other children and adults, and with toys, furniture, food and eating utensils. This high degree of physical contact with people and the environment creates a risk that children will be exposed to and spread infectious illnesses. While it is not possible for services to prevent the spread of infections that may occur, they should be working to create a hygienic environment to minimise the spread of disease and illness.



How do educators help children to develop good hygiene habits?

Along with other hygiene methods, educators help reduce the spread of infection by encouraging and modelling to children good hygiene habits. Children's self-help and self-care skills can also be promoted by educators supporting them to develop hygienic habits. Educators will reinforce hygiene habits at the service through the children's program of play experiences as well as through the daily routines such as mealtimes, nappy changing and toileting.

By setting hygiene rules with children and providing positive feedback and support, educators will help develop personal hygiene skills.

What can you do to support hygiene?

You can greatly assist your child care service by following simple hygienic procedures when you visit the service and by using good hygiene at home with children. It's also important to be aware of and follow your child care service's policy on illness and exclusion periods for infectious disease. Exclusion periods ensure that the spread of infection is limited. Ask your educator for a copy if you're unsure.

StartingBlocks.gov.au has a resource on teaching your child [hygiene at home](#) that might help.



What hygiene methods are used at early learning services?

Services use a range of hygiene methods to minimise cross infection. These include procedures and specific practices that are carried out by educators and children on a daily basis. Written hygiene policies and procedures, based on recommendations from recognised authorities such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), state and territory health departments and Food Standards Australia New Zealand, will be in place to guide educators practice.

Hygiene strategies that services use include:

- + Supporting adults to use thorough handwashing and drying practices
- + Encouraging children to follow appropriate handwashing practices
- + Ensuring equipment and toys are regularly cleaned/ washed and are well maintained
- + Keeping facilities such as bathrooms, kitchens, sleep and rest areas, and play areas clean
- + Using appropriate toileting and nappy change methods

- + Using appropriate procedures for wiping children's noses, and for teaching children how to do it for themselves
- + Displaying signs and posters about hygiene procedures at child height in bathrooms and play areas
- + Implementing appropriate food handling, preparation and storage practices
- + Providing written information to families about the recommended immunisation schedule for children
- + Developing clear procedures for handling and disposing of bodily fluids such as blood and any contaminated items used in first aid
- + Providing written information to families on exclusion periods of illness and infectious diseases.

