



## Healthy or sick

Information for parents and staff in day-care facilities,  
schools and other services for children and young people

## Contents

<b>Healthy or sick?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Prevent with good hygiene</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Infectious diseases and other contagious conditions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>When a child shows signs of illness</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>For managers and staff</b>	<b>9</b>



# Healthy or sick?

## Introduction

This guide is intended for you as a parents of a child who attends day-care facilities or school, or uses other services for children and young people, such as after-school care or clubs. It is also for those who work in these places.

You can read about what to do when a child shows signs of an infectious disease or other infectious conditions, and how you can help to limit the spread of infection.

## When is the child well?

The child is considered to be well when all the conditions below are met:

- The child does not have a fever
- The child can participate in the same activities as usual without requiring special care and attention
- The child's general condition is not affected. A child with an affected general condition is, e.g. dull, fussy, lethargic, restless and crying.

## When is the child sick?

The child is considered sick when one or more of the following conditions are met:

- The child has a fever
- The child has specific signs of illness, e.g. skin rash, vomiting, diarrhoea, affected breathing, conjunctivitis with pus
- The child's general condition is affected. A child with an affected general condition is e.g. dull, fussy, floppy, unwell, restless and crying, and will need extra care and attention.



# Prevent with good hygiene

Many infectious diseases cannot be prevented, but by good hygiene habits the spread of infection can be limited.

In particular, it is very important that both children and adults are careful about washing their hands. Adults and older children may in some cases choose to sanitize their hands.

It is recommended that parents and visitors perform hand hygiene when entering the day-care facility or school.

Children and adults are advised to wash their hands

- before cooking and eating
- after using the toilet, assisting with toileting or changing diapers
- after blowing their nose and assisting with nose blowing
- when coming in from outdoor activities
- after garbage or laundry tasks
- when hands are visibly dirty.



In addition, regular cleaning of surfaces and objects that children are in frequent contact with is recommended. As well as by visible contamination.

Also make sure that the air is changed, e.g. by airing with a draught, 5-10 min. several times a day. Find good times to ventilate so that children do not have to stay in draughts.



# Infectious diseases and other contagious conditions

The most common infectious diseases and conditions are:

- Respiratory diseases, e.g. colds and flu
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Childhood diseases, e.g. erythema infectiosum, three-day fever, chickenpox, scarlet fever and hand, foot and mouth disease
- Impetigo
- Conjunctivitis
- Pinworms, lice and scabies



## **When can your child return to day-care and school?**

As a general rule, the child must be healthy. This means that a child who has an infectious disease or condition may return when it is no longer contagious and can participate in the activities without special care and attention.

A child who is sick must be given time and space to recover. If the child returns before he or she is fully recovered, they may have reduced resistance and therefore may find it easier to contract other illnesses. It is for that reason a good idea to leave the child at home until he or she has had a fever-free day.



## Diseases that require the most attention

### Diarrhoea

- The child may return when he or she has recovered and the stools are normal again. In case of norovirus, the child should stay at home until 2 days after the diarrhoea and vomiting have stopped, so as not to pass on the infection.

### Impetigo

- Children in day-care facilities may return once the sores have dried up and the crusts have fallen off. This applies even if treatment has started.
- School-age children can attend if the sores can be covered, for example with a plaster, and if the wounds are not very widespread. The child must also have an understanding of good hand hygiene.

### Eye infection

- *Mild conjunctivitis*: common in children with colds. Caused by viruses or blockage of tear ducts due to swollen mucous membranes. Causes slight redness, tearing and pus ("yellow blobs") in the corners of the eyes, most pronounced after sleep. These children may be admitted to day-care facilities if their general condition is not affected, e.g. due to a cold.
- *Severe conjunctivitis*: the white area of the eyes is red, the eye is flowing with pus, general condition may be affected, the eyes may be swollen and there may be photophobia and a feeling of sand in the eyes. The condition is highly contagious and requires medical treatment. The child must be treated for at least 2 days before they can return. At the same time, the photophobia and tearing must have stopped. The child's general condition must no longer be affected.

### Lice and scabies

- The child may attend school the day after treatment has started.



- If lice are detected while the child is in day-care or school, the child can stay in school or day-care until the day would normally end for the child. The parents will be informed about the finding.
- See guidelines for [lice](#) og [scabies](#) at Sundhed.dk and the Region Hovedstaden's informative film on the treatment of scabies [here](#)

See an overview of other infectious diseases in the Danish Health Authority's guidelines [Smitsomme sygdomme hos børn og unge](#).

### **Attendance despite risk of infection**

In some cases, a child may be allowed to attend an institution even if there is a certain risk of infection.

This is the case for certain illnesses with a mild course, if the child's general condition is not affected. Examples include lice, hand, foot and mouth disease, cold sores, pinworms and molluscum contagiosum.

Because these diseases can also be spread by healthy carriers, it will not be possible to prevent the spread of infection, even if children with visible signs of the disease are kept at home.

### **Fever and temperature measurement**

Young children are particularly prone to fever, often reaching temperatures above 39°C when they are affected by infectious diseases.



A child has a fever when their temperature is 38.0°C or above. Generally temperature is not measured in the institution. If the employees get the impression that a child has a fever, the home will be contacted.



### **Use of ear thermometer**

If, in special cases, there is a need to measure temperature while the child is in day-care, an ear thermometer is used. It is very important to follow the instructions for use and to ensure that the model used is suitable for children.

Be aware that it can be difficult to place an ear thermometer correctly in the ear canal and that an ear thermometer measures approximately  $\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}\text{C}$  lower compared to temperature measurement in the rectum. If the thermometer is not positioned correctly, an incorrect measurement will occur.

## When a child shows signs of illness

When a child shows signs of illness, the adults work together to give the child the best conditions to recover and to limit the spread of infection.

### **Parents**

- keep sick children at home.
- accept the judgment of staff when they ask for a child with signs of illness to be brought home.
- inform the day-care facility or school about what is wrong with the child.
- are aware of notices and information about infectious diseases and possible precautions.





## The staff

If the employees find that a child is showing signs of illness while attending day-care facilities or school,

- the parents must be contacted so that the child can be brought home as soon as possible.
- the child must be separated from other children as far as possible, both for the child's sake and to reduce the risk of infection. The child is kept under supervision.
- employees must not contact a doctor without parental consent.



## Information in case of infection

- If necessary, the management provides information about the infection to the homes and the employees. This is done through the usual communication channels and does not contain personal data, unless otherwise agreed with the parents.



# For managers and staff

## **Employee relations in the event of infectious diseases**

- In the case of infectious diseases among staff, the same rules apply as for the children.
- Certain infectious diseases that are common among children may pose a risk to pregnant and breastfeeding women. Arbejdstilsynet - the Danish Working Environment Authority has prepared [vejledning for gravides og ammendes arbejdsmiljø](#). Management in day-care facilities and schools inform employees about these rules.

## **In case of many cases of illness in the institution**

- The hygiene consultants can always be contacted for advice and guidance.
- Particular attention should be paid to the occurrence of highly contagious diseases, e.g. diarrhoea and Impetigo. Contact the hygiene consultants for advice and guidance.

## **In case of serious illness,**

- In the case of serious illness, e.g. certain types of meningitis, the Danish Patient Safety Authority will inform the management.

## **Hygiene precautions**

- The manager of the day-care facility or school should regularly review hygiene guidelines to make sure that employees are familiar with and comply with them. New staff should be introduced to the hygiene guides.



## References:

*Smitsomme sygdomme hos børn og unge. Vejledning om forebyggelse i daginstitutioner, skoler m.v. Sundhedsstyrelsen 7. udg.2020*

*Sundhed.dk: Temperaturmåling*

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