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BPC pre-school ministry sickness policy

Why do we do pre-school ministry?

Creche, Little Sunday School, Mainly Music and Play Group all share one or more of the following goals.

- Enable families to feel welcome at church and provide a place where all members of the family can participate.
- Provide a place for our children to build relationships with their peers.
- Teach our children the good news about Jesus in an age-appropriate way.

Why have a policy?

As with all ministries at BPC we want to welcome people and encourage others, including children, to meet together regularly. We want to reduce the risk of spreading illnesses amongst children and Leaders.

We cannot eliminate transmission entirely, because:

- Physical contact with others will always bring a level of risk of illness spreading, especially as the contagious period often starts before the onset of symptoms.
- Young children will experience many mild/minor respiratory symptoms as their immune systems mature.

In our community there are diverse approaches to risk when it comes to infectious illness. Because of this, the aim of this policy is to gain a shared understanding of what symptoms can and can't be accepted in pre-school ministries to enable children and Leaders to participate as much as possible, while also being thoughtful about infection control.

This policy **is not** a replacement for thoughtfulness, courtesy, and concern for others, and it is important to recognize different convictions with grace.

When to stay at home.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), a government department, has published "Staying Healthy - Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services" <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf>

The government document outlines a full list of diseases and recommended exclusion (staying at home) time while infectious. BPC recommends that parents follow the guidelines for specific illnesses as recommended in the publication.

Children should stay home from pre-school ministries when:

- They are unwell and unable to participate in normal activities or require additional attention due to being unwell. This includes support that is needed to maintain hygiene (e.g., frequent nose wiping).
- Have had a fever in the last 24 hours.
- Have had vomiting and/or diarrhoea in the last 48 hours.
- Have a contagious illness as listed by the NHMRC. See Appendix 1 – How long to stay at home.

The most contagious period of many illnesses (including the common cold) is during the early stages of onset. Even if your child doesn't meet the exclusion criteria but you are concerned, consider staying home.

Common Colds

Page 88 of Staying Healthy in Child Care. By The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf> has information about the common cold. While the guidelines state there is no exclusion for the common cold, please refer to our stay-at-home criteria. The goal is to reduce the risk of transmission, rather than eliminate it.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

Please refer to the government guidelines on isolation, testing and other information regarding COVID-19 <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/>.

Appendix 1 – How long to stay at home.

For a full list of exclusion periods please refer to the NHMRC guidelines on Page 17

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf> or the single page version <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/file/5111/download?token=hm8rNZF0>

We've included a collection of the more common illnesses below. If there is a difference, the government guidelines should be taken as the authorised source.

Table 1 exclusion periods

Condition	Exclusion of case
Conjunctivitis	Exclude until discharge from the eyes has stopped, unless a doctor has diagnosed non-infectious conjunctivitis
Diarrhoea (no organism identified)	Exclude until there has not been a loose bowel motion for 48 hours
Hand, foot and mouth disease	Exclude until all blisters have dried
Head lice (pediculosis)	Not excluded if effective treatment begins before the next day at the education and care service. The child does not need to be sent home immediately if head lice are detected
Herpes simplex (cold sores, fever blisters)	Not excluded if the person can maintain hygiene practices to minimise the risk of transmission. If the person cannot comply with these practice (e.g. because they are too young), they should be excluded until the sores are dry. Sores should be covered with a dressing, where possible
Impetigo	Exclude until appropriate antibiotic treatment has started. Any sores on exposed skin should be covered with a watertight dressing
Influenza and influenza-like illnesses	Exclude until person is well
Worms	Exclude if loose bowel motions are occurring Exclusion is not necessary if treatment has occurred