



Just the Facts

57-004-1193

...About Infections in Child Care Centers

Children get infections whether or not they are in child care centers. However, they tend to get more infections in child care centers, and young children are more likely to catch infections because they have not developed the necessary protective immunities.

There are other reasons why children in child care centers get more infections—especially colds and diarrhea—than children cared for in their homes. For one thing, children in group settings come in contact with many children, so they have a much greater chance of getting an infection from another child. Children also share toys and touch each other during play and this spreads germs. Furthermore, many children have not yet learned proper use of the toilet or the importance of hand washing. And finally, young children need a great deal of “hands-on” care.

It is especially difficult to prevent colds from spreading. Cold germs are spread:

- * Through the air, whenever children with colds cough or sneeze.
- * Through direct contact, whenever children with colds touch their saliva or runny noses and then touch other children.
- * Through indirect contact, when children with colds touch their saliva or runny noses and then touch an object, such as a toy or furniture. Germs can live on an object for some time and can be picked up by an uninfected child who touches the object.

Diarrhea germs are also easily spread, especially among children who are still in diapers. These germs are found in bowel movements and are spread:

- * When caregivers or children get the germs on their hands and then touch other children.
- * When caregivers or children eat food that has been prepared by someone whose hands had diarrhea germs on them.



- ◆ Child Care Facilities
- ◆ Information
- ◆ Preventing Germ Transmission

For additional information contact your local health consultant or health care provider.

THINGS PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS CAN DO:

- ◆ Make sure your child has received all the recommended immunizations.
- ◆ When you drop off your child, talk to the caregiver about how the child is feeling. Report symptoms of a possible infection and ask if your child should be excluded from child care that day. For example, if you report that your child is feeling a bit under the weather, the caregiver will know to watch for signs of illness. If, during the day, the caregiver observes signs of infection, she or he will notify you. Prompt action when an infection is first suspected can often prevent its spread through the center.
- ◆ Check that routines for washing hands and changing diapers are posted in the center. Carefully following these routines can help prevent the spread of infections. These routines should also be followed at home and whenever parents change their child's diaper in the center.
- ◆ Make sure that soap and clean towels are always available at the sinks. The most effective measure for preventing the transmission of infectious disease is the practice of frequent hand washing.
- ◆ Remember that children with certain infections should stay at home, so you can ensure your child gets the appropriate care. This will also help prevent the infection from spreading to the other children in the child care program. Children should be kept at home if they have:
 - * An illness that prevents them from taking part in the activities.
 - * An illness that requires more care than staff can provide without affecting the health and safety of other children.
 - * A very infectious illness. (Contact the child care staff or Preventive Medicine Service to get a list of the "excludable" illnesses.)
- ◆ Notify a caregiver if you have to keep your child at home because of an infection. Appropriate action can then be taken by the caregivers to help prevent the spread of infection among other children.
- ◆ Plan ahead by making arrangements for those occasions when your child becomes ill. Ensure all emergency notification data is completed and updated at least annually or more often if a change of information occurs. Make sure you know who is going to look after your child, since there is a good chance that, at some time or another, your child will have to stay home.