

Ideas and practices



suggested by childcare services as part of their pandemic service continuity plans

The Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés asked all childcare centres and day care centres to prepare a service continuity plan in the event of an influenza pandemic.

An analysis of the service continuity plans prepared by childcare centres and day care centres has made it possible to make a list of tangible and effective approaches to notably promote the awareness of children and inform parents and staff members about the ways and means of preventing the spread of the virus. The Department considers it advisable to inform all childcare services of these ways and means, particularly within the current context of the influenza A(H1N1) pandemic. **Indeed, these approaches concern to a very large extent hygiene and prevention practices**

applicable to every childcare service whether in a facility or a home environment.

Following the declaration of a pandemic by medical authorities, all childcare services must increase their vigilance to the maximum level and greatly reinforce the prevention measures recommended by these authorities, such as washing hands and respiratory hygiene. This document also incorporates these recommendations.

Through the dissemination of these approaches and due to the current pandemic context, the Department wishes to encourage home childcare operations to reinforce the measures already taken or planned over the short term.

PART I - ACTIVITIES THAT SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT AT ALL TIMES

Washing hands

This practice is the most important that you can implement for prevention purposes to reduce the spread of the influenza virus and several other infections.

- Teach children an appropriate hand washing technique and show them how germs found on the hands can spread quickly.

To help you with this task, you can make a demonstration using a "blue-tinged light"¹, which reveals spots that are often forgotten when washing hands, spots that may serve as germ reservoirs and promote their transmission to other persons. You can also carry out this activity using vegetable oil, vaseline or gouache².

Put some on children's hands and ask them to touch objects so that children understand how germs may be transmitted. Then have children wash their hands at different temperatures (Be careful! Hot water may cause burns), both with and without soap, to show children the best combination for cleaning their hands well. (As no scientific study has been carried out on this subject, it is recommended that you first test the methods to make sure that the result obtained is the one you are looking for).

- Use an hourglass to count with children the time it takes to wash their hands (at least 15 seconds) or have them sing "Happy Birthday" twice.

¹ For more information, consult the article entitled « Des "faux microbes" lumineux! » in the March 1999 edition of the *Bye-bye les microbes!* newsletter, which is available on the web site of the MFA [<http://www2.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/publications/bye-bye-microbes/no21/outils.asp>].

² Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ), *Mes aliments, j'en prends soin*, 2006, p. 6-8. available on the web site of the MAPAQ [http://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/E6619A22-BE11-4FDF-8139-3EFFB9FD1016/0/trousse_pedagogique.pdf].



- Make sure that children wash their hands after coughing or sneezing, blowing their nose, before meals and snacks, after going to the washroom, upon returning from outside and after every messy activity.
- Adopt a housekeeping and disinfection procedure for the premises (daily, weekly and monthly tasks). This procedure will involve the use of customary cleaning products.

- Prepare stories on the spread of germs and the importance of washing hands, and tell these stories to the children.

- Do theme-based activities with children to promote washing hands.
- Post and promote the publication *Off with germs! Lather up!*³.
- Inform and promote the awareness of parents about these measures so that parents also apply them at home.

Respiratory hygiene

Respiratory hygiene focuses on simple steps that should be taken when a person coughs or sneezes to prevent the spread of viruses.

- Carry out theme-based activities on the reasons justifying the recommendation to cough or sneeze in the fold of the elbow or in the upper arm when facial tissues are not readily available.
- Encourage children to remind their classmates or their parents to use their arm to cough or sneeze whenever they forget to.
- Do a prevention activity in which the childcare worker simulates a sneeze using a spray gun.
- Inform and promote the awareness of parents about these measures so that they also apply them at home.
- Post and promote the publication *Atchooo! Hey germs, no hands! Off you go to the garbage can!*⁴.

Cleaning of surfaces

It is possible to limit the spread of viruses by cleaning the workplace frequently.

- Add the disinfection of door handles and light switches to the routine disinfection of tables and chairs.

Cleaning of toys

The spread of viruses may be limited through the frequent cleaning of toys, which are major virus transmission vectors.

- Favour the purchase of dishwasher-resistant plastic toys.
- Make a list of the toys that have been cleaned to ensure a better follow-up.
- Pay special attention to toys that children can put in their mouth.
- Make sure that toys are cleaned frequently according to the recommendations.

Management of sick children

For prevention purposes, it is important to manage the presence at the childcare or day care centre of persons with flu-like symptoms (for example, fever and coughing with headache, extreme fatigue, or aches and pains).

- Make parents aware of the importance of keeping a sick child at home, **especially when the child has flu-like symptoms (fever and cough accompanied by headache, fatigue, aches and pains or extreme fatigue, etc.)**, and arrange for an alternative solution if the child cannot attend the childcare service (grandparents, neighbour, friend, other member of the family, etc.).
- Post the symptoms associated with the influenza A(H1N1) virus and ask parents to take action when in doubt.
- Ask parents to make sure that a person will be able to quickly pick up the child at the childcare service if the child becomes sick and needs to be sent home.

³ Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés, 2007.

⁴ Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés, 2006.

Other practices put in place

Other practices may help limit the transmission of infections and viruses.

- Give all staff members the document entitled *La prévention des infections chez les personnes travaillant en service de garde à l'enfance, y compris les stagiaires*⁵.
- Review the procedure for brushing teeth and for storing toothbrushes.
- On a daily basis, set aside a period when children are outside to open the windows to air the rooms.
- Request the collaboration of parents in applying the prevention measures at home.
- Disinfect the washrooms intended for children several times a day.
- Employ paper or a clean piqué cloth for each child when using the dressing table.



PART 2 – MEASURES TO BE APPLIED WHEN A PANDEMIC IS DECLARED BY PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITIES

This section presents the measures planned by childcare services in preparation for pandemic situations, such as the one recently declared following the appearance of the influenza A(H1N1) virus.

Washing hands **In a pandemic period**

In a pandemic period, it is necessary to reinforce the measures taken for prevention purposes.

- See to it that all parents and children wash their hands upon arriving at and leaving the childcare service.
- Install an alcohol-based (at least 60%) antiseptic gel dispenser at the entrance to the childcare service for parents and visitors.
- Evaluate and review the effectiveness of the planned measures.

Respiratory hygiene **In a pandemic period**

In a pandemic period, it is important to step up hygiene practices (washing hands and respiratory hygiene).

- Wash your hands after helping a child to blow his nose.
- Plan to have an alcohol-based hand rinse that is readily available to childcare workers to facilitate and promote frequent hand hygiene.

- See to it that children wash their hands often, in particular after blowing their nose.
- Encourage children to use the bend of their elbow or their upper arm to cough and sneeze.

Reduction of contacts

In a pandemic and sustained virulence period

In a pandemic and sustained virulence situation, the reinforcement of prevention measures could take the form of a further reduction of contacts despite the difficulty that this poses in a childcare service.

- Place children at least one metre apart for activities during which they will not be called upon to move about (for example during the siesta or when a story is being read).
- During the siesta, have children adopt a position where their heads are not facing one another to avoid direct contact with other children's secretions. If children are coughing or sneezing, separate them from the other children.
- Suspend routines involving the handling of objects by several children.

⁵ [http://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/SG_prevention_infection.pdf].

- Limit contacts by having children play outside as often as possible.
- Reduce the time that children spend together when they arrive at and leave the childcare service.
- Limit the access of parents and other visitors to the cloakroom.
- Ask parents to limit the number of people who come to pick up their child and to avoid comings and goings during the day.
- Install an alcohol-based hand disinfectant dispenser at the entrance to the childcare service and ask visitors and parents to use it.
- Except in the case of heavy objects, ask suppliers to leave goods at the entrance and promote telephone or e-mail contacts with suppliers.
- Air the premises for approximately 30 minutes a day and maintain a humidity rate of 30 to 50%.

Cleaning and disinfection of surfaces In a pandemic period

In a pandemic period, the cleaning of childcare premises should be even more systematic.

- Disinfect on a daily basis the surfaces that are normally disinfected (door handles, handrails, switches, mattresses used for the siesta, etc.) and disinfect twice a day those objects that are normally disinfected once a day (toilets, sinks, etc.).
- Each day, after the reception period, carry out a systematic disinfection of horizontal surfaces in contact with hands and surfaces found in traffic areas (door handles, handrails, etc.).
- Disinfect toys, door handles, children's beds as well as all objects that are frequently touched during the day.
- Do an additional disinfection during the siesta, by giving priority to tables, chairs and toys recently used by children.
- Use a sprayer (for example the same one as for the routine disinfection, kept out of the reach of children) to disinfect tables, chairs and recently handled toys.

Cleaning and disinfection of toys In a pandemic period

In a pandemic period, the disinfection of toys takes on great importance.

- Remove toys that pose the greatest risks, such as disguises, to reduce the risks of infection. Favour plastic toys that can be put in the dishwasher.
- Give each child his or her own play dough so that children will be less likely to trade play dough. It is preferable to wait 24 hours before re-using play dough. Set aside a quantity for the morning and another quantity for the afternoon if this activity takes place twice a day.
- Purchase a net to place dirty toys in it as they get dirty.
- Limit the number of toys in circulation; give preference to individual games.
- Quarantine toys that cannot be cleaned immediately, until such time as they have been cleaned.



Other practices put in place In a pandemic period

In a pandemic period, other practices may be implemented to limit the spread of the virus.

- Avoid the sharing of food and beverages by children during meals and snacks.
- If children wear smocks, they must be washed at the childcare service and changed daily.

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