

Winter respiratory illness

Information for ECCs, Kindergartens and Kohanga Reo

Kia ora koutou

Currently a lot of pre-school children in the Wellington region are unwell. At this time of year respiratory viruses including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are common in the community and illnesses can be easily spread in schools and early childhood centres. Adults and older children get milder RSV illness but can pass it on to babies so we strongly recommend that people maintain good hand hygiene, stay home if they have any symptoms of a respiratory tract illness

Respiratory viruses cause the following symptoms: fever (temperature $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or feeling hot, sweaty, and chills), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and fatigue/ tiredness, and sometimes diarrhoea and vomiting especially with small children.

Please advise parents and caregivers if they are worried about their child's symptoms or if their child has long-term health problems (e.g. asthma, diabetes, kidney, heart or immunity problems), then they should phone their family doctor or Healthline for free on 0800 611 116 for further advice. Most people recover at home and only need to see their doctor if the illness gets worse or is not improving.

If adults or children develop concerning symptoms, such as rapid breathing, difficulty breathing, chest pain, severe vomiting, or if a child is not responding or is difficult to wake up, they should seek medical attention immediately – including calling 111 for an ambulance if it is an emergency.

COVID-19

Winter respiratory illness symptoms can be similar to COVID-19 symptoms. Children under 11 years of age are not routinely tested for COVID-19 **UNLESS** the child:

- has been in contact with a COVID-19 case
- returned from a place where there is COVID-19
- left managed isolation in the last 14 days
- or the doctor is concerned that the child has COVID-19.

Adults and teens with relevant respiratory symptoms **DO** require COVID-19 testing if they have a respiratory illness. Call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116 for further advice on COVID-19 testing

Controlling illness at your early learning centre

- Remind parents and caregivers of your centre's illness policy
- Anyone who is unwell should stay at home until 24 hours after symptoms have stopped and they are well. These symptoms usually last a week but in some cases, can last longer.
- Ensure excellent hand washing and drying for children and staff
- Increase cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, especially at child height
- Open doors and windows to increase ventilation
- Please notify RPH by calling 04 570 9002 if a child from your centre is hospitalised or you have large numbers of children from your centre away (more than 15% of the total roll).

The following link has some good tips for looking after people with influenza like illness and stopping it spreading to other people at home: <https://www.rph.org.nz/public-health-topics/early-childhood-centres/fact-sheets/colds-and-flu-what-to-do-if-your-child-is-sick.pdf>