

Immunisation in child care settings

by Lyndsay Mundy

Immunisation is a key way of minimising the spread of many infectious diseases among children. Children in child care may be at a higher risk of exposure to infectious diseases due to contact with more children and adults than children at home. It is very important that services maintain an up to date record of children's and adults' immunisation status.

Strategies for supporting families

Services can assist families in finding out about the recommended immunisation schedule for children by visiting the Immunise Australia Program website. This website contains details about recommended immunisations for children and when they should have them. Services can print out and display the factsheet available on the website for families. The current national immunisation schedule recommends that children receive immunisations at regular intervals until they are two years old, with further immunisations occurring until they are twelve. The schedule includes immunisation for common childhood diseases against which children have little or no protection.

Families and services can contact their local doctor's surgery, child health nurse, local council or their state or territory government health department to find out where children can be immunised.

Whooping cough

According to the Child Youth Health website there has been an increase in the incidents of whooping cough (pertussis) in the past 18 months. Whooping cough is highly infectious. To decrease its spread, anyone diagnosed should be excluded from child care until five days after starting treatment or, if not treated, for three weeks from the start of symptoms.

This article relates to:

FDCQA Principles: 1.2, 4.3, and 5.4

OSHCQA Principles: 6.3 and 7.3

QIAS Principles: 6.6 and 5.5

What if there is an outbreak?

While it is beneficial if all children are immunised, there are many reasons why families may choose not to have their children immunised, or not keep their child's immunisation schedule up to date. Services should always respect the family's decision. However, it is important to ensure that families know if there is an outbreak of an immunisable disease in your service, children without up to date immunisation may be excluded from care until the outbreak has passed. Keeping a current record of all children's immunisation schedules will help you to quickly identify which children need to be excluded from the service if there is an outbreak of an immunisable disease.

An effective way of keeping an accurate record is to make sure that each child's immunisation record is sighted each time they have an immunisation. Then the service's record can be updated with the date that the child was immunised and for what disease. It is up to each service to decide the best way to keep these records, but it is important to ensure that they can be quickly referred to in the event of an outbreak.

It is also important for adults who work with children to keep their immunisation schedule up to date. In some cases, adults can be the source of infection because they may carry diseases without suffering symptoms ■

References and further reading

- Child and Youth Health. (2010). *Whooping cough (Pertussis)*. Retrieved 11 April, 2011, from <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=303&id=1851>
- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2006). *Staying healthy in child care* (4th ed.). Retrieved 11 April, 2011, from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/node/1226>

Useful website

- Immunise Australia Program: www.immunise.health.gov.au