



The Daily Morning Health Check



Perform a quick health assessment of each child **every** day upon arrival and before the parent leaves. This allows you to make a judgment about what is normal or not for each child, rather than to diagnose an illness. It also identifies problems early.

Providers should do their quick check not in a formal exam routine, but as a casual observation of the child in their initial contact as they welcome the child. You are checking easily observable, simple signs of well-being. A health check is not a medical examination. It is not the way to enforce your policies with a parent. It is not a way to find reasons to exclude children. Exclusion of a child may result from a quick check observation and your follow-up, but your goal is to know your children better and to provide good care.

In a child care setting where lots of people are coming at the same time, it is hard to take a moment with each child. However, this welcoming routine can establish many things and is good child development policy. This contact will help you better understand each child, help the children feel comfortable and good about themselves, reduce the spread of illness by excluding children with obvious signs of illness, and foster better communications with parents.

Signs to Observe

When conducting a morning health check, you should watch for the following:

- General mood and changes in behavior (happy, sad, cranky, sluggish, sleepy, unusual behavior)
- Fever or elevated body temperature (if there is a change in child's behavior or appearance)
- Skin rashes, itchy skin, or itchy scalp, unusual spots, swelling or bruises
- Complaints of pain and not feeling well
- Other signs and symptoms of disease (such as severe coughing, sneezing, breathing difficulties, discharge from nose, ears or eyes, diarrhea, vomiting and so on)
- Reported illness in child or family members since last date of attendance

Use All Your Senses to Check for Signs of Illness

Listen to what the child and parents tell you about how the child is feeling. Is the child's voice hoarse, is he having trouble breathing, or is he coughing?

Look at the child from her level. Observe for signs of crankiness, pain, discomfort or being tired. Does the child look pale, have a rash or sores, a runny nose or eyes?

Feel the child's cheek and neck for warmth, clamminess or bumps as a casual way of greeting.

Smell the child for unusual odor in their breath, diaper or stool.

Using Findings to Make Decisions

If you have concerns about how a particular child looks or feels, discuss them with the parent right then. Perhaps the parent needs to take the child home. If you decide that the child will remain, be sure to discuss how you will care for the child and at what point you will call the parent. It is your decision, not the parent's, whether the program will accept responsibility for the ill child. If the child stays all day, make sure you inform the parent about changes in the child's health status. Simple information about activity level, appetite, food intake, bowel movements and nap-time can be invaluable to the family.

Contrary to popular belief and practice, only a few illnesses require exclusion of sick children to ensure protection of other children and staff (see Exclusion for Illness Policy, page 85).

When your child care setting agrees to allow mildly ill children to attend, take these steps to better meet their needs, and be sure to follow California regulations:

- Maintain a small room or area where they can spend quiet time while being supervised.
- Assign one staff person to remain with these children when others go outside.

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- Reported illness in child or family members

Use all of your senses . . .

- **LOOK** - for signs
- **LISTEN** - for complaints
- **FEEL** - for fever
- **SMELL** - for unusual odor