



DURHAM
REGION
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Fall/Winter 2026

Wee Care

Newsletter



Outbreak Control: Key Measures for Child Care Centres

When an outbreak is declared, infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures must be implemented immediately and remain in place until the outbreak is declared over. The Durham Region Health Department recently updated the Outbreak Control Package for child care centres. Make yourselves familiar with this package, specifically the outbreak control measures found on pages 5-7. These measures must be implemented during an outbreak to limit the spread of illness.

Communication and illness management:

Staff and parents/guardians must be advised of the outbreak, and an Outbreak Control Sign must be posted at all entrances. Centres should passively screen children and staff, and symptomatic children must be separated in a supervised area until they can go home. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and IPAC precautions should be used when caring for symptomatic children.

Activities and food service:

Group sensory activities and plush or absorbent items are not permitted during an outbreak. Mouthed toys must be cleaned and disinfected immediately after use, and personal items such as bottles and soothers must be clearly labelled and used only by their designated child. Family-style meals are not permitted, and children must not prepare or serve food for others.

Cleaning and disinfection:

High-touch surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily. During an enteric outbreak, a disinfectant with a Norovirus kill claim must be available. If bleach is used, the outbreak concentration is 5000 ppm with a 10-minute contact time. Always follow manufacturer instructions for dilution, use, contact time and expiry dates.



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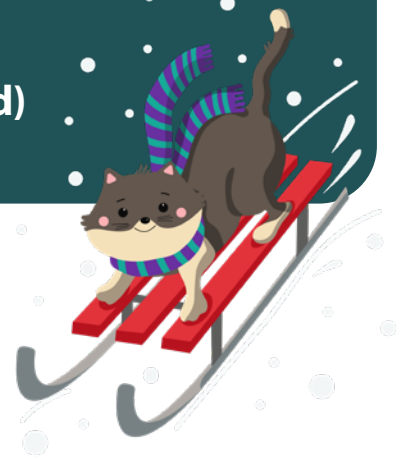
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Outbreak Control: Key Measures for Child Care Centres (cont'd)



Movement and hand hygiene:

Staff movement between childcare locations is not permitted, and movement between rooms or licensed age groups is discouraged. To reduce the risk of further transmission during an outbreak, new admissions, child transitions between affected and unaffected rooms, and centre tours should be restricted.

Hand hygiene should be increased for both children and staff, particularly after toileting, diapering or contact with body substances and before preparing, serving or eating food.

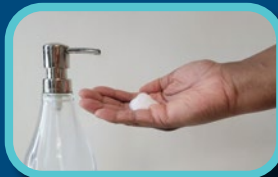
Consistent communication, enhanced cleaning, proper hand hygiene and limiting movement are key to reducing illness transmission and safely managing an outbreak.

For additional details and outbreak measures, refer to pages 5–7 of the Outbreak Control Package and notify your Public Health Inspector when there is an increase in enteric illness.

Handwashing



Step 1:
Wet hands



Step 2:
Apply liquid
soap



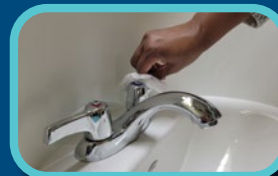
Step 3:
Scrub backs of hands, between
fingers, thumbs and around
fingernails for at least 20 seconds



Step 4:
Rinse



Step 5:
Dry hands



Step 6:
Turn off taps
with towel

REMEMBER, proper handwashing can remove germs that make you sick.



Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
Dial 311 (within regional limits)
durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



DUHEV-280 VER2 Feb 2026



Top Child Care Inspection Findings in 2025

Each year, Durham Region public health inspectors inspect licensed child care centres to evaluate food safety compliance, Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) practices, and overall safety standards, while working with operators to support healthy environments for children and staff.

In 2025, the most frequently observed infractions highlight the importance of cleanliness, routine maintenance, and safe practices in child care settings.

Top Five Inspection Findings

1. Toys, equipment, furniture, and surfaces not maintained clean and in good repair

Frequently touched items can contribute to the spread of illness if not cleaned and disinfected regularly. Damaged toys and equipment can also create safety hazards and are more difficult to clean and disinfect effectively.

2. Kitchen equipment, non-food contact surfaces, and linens not adequately maintained

Kitchen equipment, including refrigerators and freezers, must function properly to keep food safe. Clean, well-maintained equipment and surfaces help prevent contamination and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

3. Health and safety hazards identified in outdoor play spaces

Regular inspections and maintenance of outdoor play areas help prevent injuries and reduce health risks. Common concerns included fencing, exposed hardware, and uncovered sandboxes that may attract animals or accumulate debris.

4. Food contact surfaces not properly maintained

Food preparation surfaces, utensils, and containers must be durable, non-toxic, and easy to clean. Damaged items can harbour bacteria and increase the risk of food contamination.



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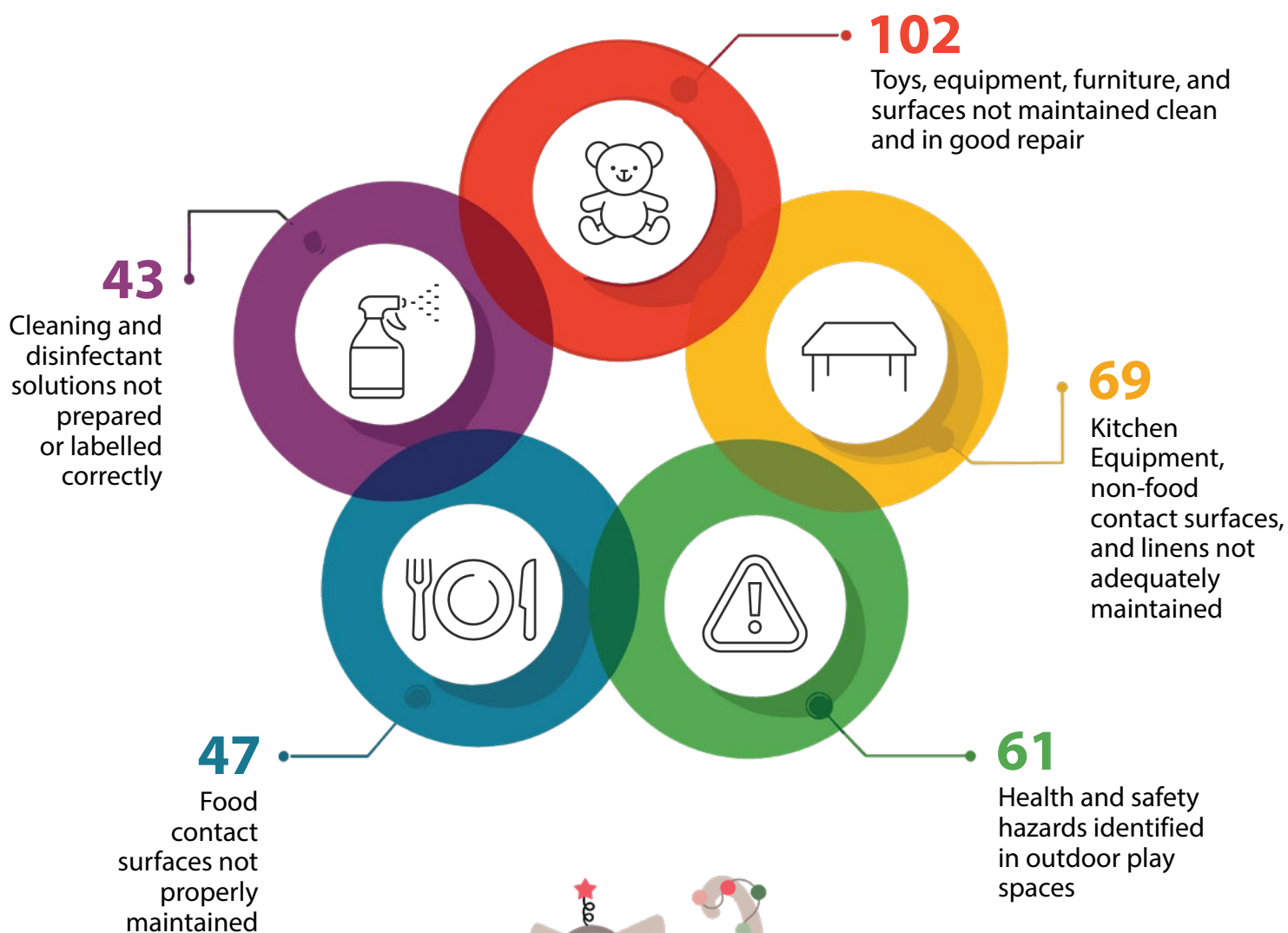
Top Child Care Inspection Findings in 2025 (cont'd)

5. Cleaning and disinfectant solutions not prepared or labelled correctly

Disinfectants must be mixed, labelled, and used according to manufacturer directions to ensure they are effective and safe. Incorrect preparation can reduce effectiveness or leave harmful residues behind.

By conducting regular self-inspections, following cleaning schedules, training staff, and addressing maintenance concerns promptly, child care operators can help create healthier and safer environments for children.

Number of Infractions Identified in 2025





Hot Water Reminders

- Taps that are accessible for use by the children must have a maximum hot water temperature of 43°C to prevent scalding.
- Hot water tanks are to be maintained at a minimum of 60°C as per the Ontario Building Code and to prevent the growth of Legionella bacteria.
- The kitchen within your child care centre must be continuously equipped with hot water as per the Food Premises Regulation.

Policy Development for Outdoor Air Quality - Preparation for Wildfire Smoke Events and Extreme Heat

As environmental health events become increasingly common, it is important for childcare operators to remain informed and prepared. Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) has developed guidance and tools to help centres respond effectively while maintaining safe and healthy learning environments.

We encourage facilities to incorporate these measures and guidance into your policy and procedures as part of ongoing repeat events that may occur during summer months.

The following resources are available to support the health and safety of children and staff during periods of extreme heat and wildfire smoke:

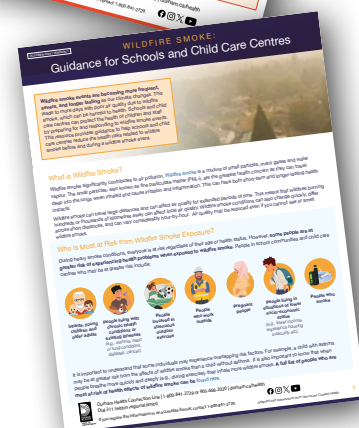
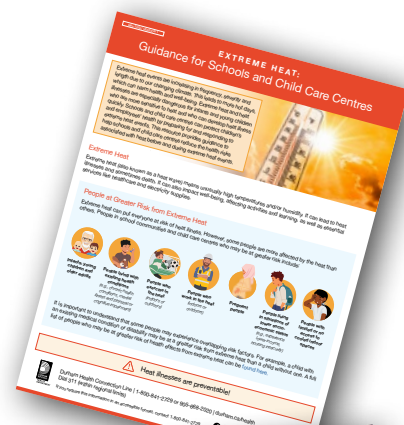
- [Wildfire Smoke: Guidance for School and Child Care Centres](#)
- [Extreme Heat: Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centres](#)
- durham.ca/airquality

Referencing these resources in your policies and procedures can provide valuable guidance for responding to extreme heat and wildfire smoke events.

Practices to Include in your Policies & Procedures

Key practices to include in your policies and procedures:

- Monitoring daily air quality forecasts using the **WeatherCAN App** and the [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#)
- Planning alternative indoor activities when poor air quality is forecasted
- Communicating air quality alerts to staff and making timely decisions about outdoor play
- Ensuring children with medical conditions have access to prescribed medications such as inhalers



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Policy Development for Outdoor Air Quality - Preparation for Wildfire Smoke Events and Extreme Heat (cont'd)

Creating Cleaner Indoor Spaces

When outdoor air quality is poor, centres can help reduce exposure by:

- Keeping windows and doors closed when appropriate
- Optimizing ventilation systems
- Using high-quality air filters where possible
- Using portable air purifiers in frequently occupied spaces



Don't Forget Heat Safety

Poor air quality and extreme heat often occur together during summer months. Centres should balance efforts to reduce smoke exposure while maintaining safe indoor temperatures. Staying hydrated, using air-conditioned spaces when available, and watching for signs of heat illness remain important.

A Proactive Approach

Developing an outdoor air quality policy demonstrates a child care centre's commitment to providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff. By staying informed, planning ahead, and responding quickly to changing conditions, centres can help reduce health risks and support children's well-being throughout the year.



Behind the Inspection: The Role of Public Health Inspectors

You've likely met us; but who are we, exactly?

Across Canada, Public Health Inspectors (PHIs), also called Environmental Health Officers, play an important role in preventing the spread of infection and promoting safe, sanitary environments throughout the communities. When a PHI visits your child care centre, the goal is to help protect the health of the children in your care, your educators, and the families you serve.

PHIs are equipped with specialized education and practical training to assume a pertinent role in public health. Following post-secondary education at an accredited public health program, the PHI's journey starts with the completion of a supervised practicum with a Board of Health, and then the successful passing of the national Board of Certification examination hosted by the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI). With the achievement of the Certificate in Public Health Inspection (Canada) designation, a PHI will use their knowledge and skills to assess health risks, interpret legislation, conduct inspections and investigations, and work with operators to address public health concerns and maintain safe conditions.

At Durham Region Health Department, our PHIs work closely with licensed child care operators, supervisors, educators, and kitchen staff to provide guidance on operating a centre safely and preventing illness. PHIs will conduct routine environmental child care and food safety inspections, review infection prevention and control measures, review illness surveillance and exclusion policies, provide outbreak support, and investigate complaints and health hazards under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, [Food Premise O.Reg 493/17](#), [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) and [Ontario Public Health – Infection Prevention and Control for Child Care Centres](#).

We recognize the dedication and effort it takes to run a licensed child care program, and we are here to support you. Let's continue to work together in protecting the health of the children, the educators and the families you serve!



A reminder: Durham Region Health Department Public Health Inspectors carry a badge and Regional photo identification. If you don't recognize an inspector, ask to see it. And, if you're still unsure, call the Durham Health Connection Line 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 to confirm.



REMINDER!

Update your contact information



From time-to-time, there may be an urgent message that Durham Region Health Department will have to send to all child care centres. A current contact list will help us distribute the information to you more efficiently. If your centre has had any changes to your child care centre contacts, such as managers, supervisors, telephone numbers, or e-mail addresses, please forward the new information to ehl@durham.ca to update the list.

Please print and post this e-newsletter in a common area for those who do not have access to email.

The WEE CARE Newsletter is published and distributed by Durham Region Health Department, Health Protection Division, and is distributed to licensed child care centres in Durham Region.

Questions, comments, and article submissions can be forwarded to ehl@durham.ca.

Acknowledgements: Health Protection Division



We would like to remind all child care centre owners, supervisors, and staff that we welcome any suggestions that you may have for future article topics or ideas and any comments you have to improve the newsletter!

We welcome your ideas and suggestions!

Please submit comments by email to ehl@durham.ca.