

HEALTH LINK ONLINE

Uniting Children, Parents, Caregivers and Health Professionals

VOLUME 26

page 1

Winter 2014

Sign Up at www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org for E-Mail Alerts from ECELS

Heating, Ventilation & Humidity

Properly functioning Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems reduce health problems. They dilute infectious particles in the air, so people in the facility don't get sick easily. Good ventilation controls odors and exposure to pollutants. A properly functioning HVAC filter removes dust and dirt, keeping the facility cleaner.

Child care facilities should adjust HVAC systems for air quality in winter conditions. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends some steps to keep people healthy and cut energy costs too.

1. Ensure proper ventilation. At least once a year, have a competent HVAC contractor inspect and service the equipment. Make sure the ventilation of your facility meets the standards of American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers, [ASHRAE Standard 62-2013](#). For more details about the standard go to <https://www.ashrae.org/resources--publications/bookstore/standards-62-1--62-2>.



2. Manage [indoor humidity levels](#) as outside temperatures drop. Properly adjusted humidity protects the building structure and its contents. Cold air holds less moisture. In the winter, the HVAC system heats cold outdoor air. The warmed dry air can hold more moisture. It takes moisture from any surface— e.g. from body surfaces.

Infection-fighting starts in the moist linings of the nose and throat. When the air is too dry, these usually moist linings get dry, making it easier for infections to get started. Dry noses itch, tempting fingers to poke them. Poking fingers in noses spreads germs and can cause nosebleeds.

Prevent infection and nose bleeds by drinking fluids and maintaining proper indoor humidity.

Keep indoor humidity between 30% and 50%. For more details, go to

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign/moisturecontrol.html#Controlling%20Moisture%20in%20Ventilation%20Air>.

3. Change HVAC filters on a regular basis in systems that have air handlers. Air filters should have a dust-spot rating between 35% and 80% or a Minimum Efficiency Rating Value (MERV) between 8 and 13.

(continued on page 2)

Affordable Health Insurance

Go to the now functioning “Health Insurance Marketplace” to apply for coverage. Many early educators are eligible for reduced cost insurance. The options include subsidized private insurance, Medicaid, the state’s Child Health Insurance Plan as well as unsubsidized plans.

For the first time, federal law requires consumer access to information that lines up all the options with each other. You can compare what different health insurance plans will cost and what they cover for you and your family. You don't have to do anything if you already have a health insurance policy that meets the federal essential coverage requirements. Even so, you still might check the Marketplace to see if you are eligible for a policy at a lower cost.

Everyone should have insurance that covers the cost of health care for [preventive care](#) as well as health care for illness and injury. Everyone should be able to get preventive care without a copayment or paying a yearly deductible. Preventive care can help you take good care of yourself, your family, and the children who are counting on you.



(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1: Heating, Ventilation & Humidity)

Look for the MERV values or ratings on the packaging of HVAC filters. Choose one that allows the air handler equipment to maintain proper flow. The higher the MERV rating, the more particulates will be filtered and the more resistance to flow. The fan motor power must be powerful enough to push air against the filter's resistance for proper flow. Check the air flow from all vents that bring air into the room and those that return air to the system. Make sure that they are not obstructed by furniture or large objects. For more details, go to <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schooldesign/hvac.html#Air%20Filtration>.

EPA Schools, IAQ Connector offers regular updates about how to improve indoor air quality. To receive these updates, contact IAQfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com.

(continued from page 1: Affordable Health Care)

Some early childhood providers operate as small businesses. Small business employers can choose from a range of coverage options for their employees. The tool to use is the [Small Business Health Options Program, or SHOP](#). Eligible employers may qualify for a tax credit worth up to 50 % of the employer's premium contribution to a SHOP plan. In 2014, some small business employers will let employees choose from a number of plans. Others may offer their employees a plan the employer chose.

You can get information, apply and enroll in an individual or SHOP health care plan online. Some people find it easier to call and speak to a live person on the phone. For the online system, go to <https://www.healthcare.gov/contact-us/>. To talk with a live person by phone, call 1-800-318-2596. The phone option is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (For TTY, call 1-855-889-4325). A customer service representative can answer your questions and help you apply to enroll in a health insurance plan.

If you'd rather have face-to-face help instead of using the website or phone helpers, this service is available. The government has provided training and certification to people who can help you evaluate your alternatives. These helpers are known by different names, depending on who provides the service and where they're located. For example, they may be called "navigators," "application assisters," or "certified application counselors." To find face-to-face helpers, go to LocalHelp.HealthCare.gov.

The enrollment period for those who do not already have health insurance has been extended to March 1, 2014. Use the help the government is offering. Sign up for an insurance plan that suits your situation. Use the help being offered to understand and sign up for an insurance plan that meets your budget.

While some may pay more, most will pay less for health care by signing up in the Marketplace. Those who don't have health insurance will have to pay a fine and risk paying full charges for health care. Going without health insurance is a gamble that can keep you from receiving the care you need. It can put you in deep debt from medical bills if you get sick or injured.

Drink Water

Children over 12 months of age and all adults should drink water. Clean, safe water helps all parts of the body work well. Choose water instead of sugar sweetened or carbonated beverages.

Water has no sugar, fat, or calories. Drinking water for thirst helps prevent obesity. Dairy drinks, including milk, are a recommended part of a healthful diet. Treat them as a food to have in recommended amounts. For thirst, choose and offer water first.



Colds, Coughs and Runny Noses



Colds, coughs and runny noses are more common in the winter than in any other season. Poor circulation of air, dry heated air and crowded indoor spaces make it easier to share germs that make people sick.

The average child has 3 to 10 colds a year. Children in their first couple of years of child care or school have one or two more colds than children their age who receive care only at home and who have no siblings to bring infection home. After three years of age, children in child care for a year or more have fewer colds than those who have not built immunity by being in group care.

At least 100 different kinds of viruses can cause cold symptoms. The symptoms include runny nose, a scratchy or sore throat, headache, cough, sneezing, fussiness, muscle aches or tiredness. Some children may have a low grade fever. A mild rise in temperature indicates that the body is working to fight a problem. A fever helps the body fight infection. These fevers do not need treatment as long as the child is not uncomfortable.

No medication cures the common cold. Multiple research studies confirm that over-the-counter cold medications are not helpful and may cause complications. So, what can you do for a child with a cold?

- Keep nasal passages open when mucus gets thick. Use saline nose drops, spray or mist to thin mucus so it drains more easily.
- Encourage the child to sit up or sleep on a mattress that has something under the head end of it, so mucus will drain away. Swallowed mucus passes into the stomach and out of the body harmlessly. Don't just put a pillow under the child's head. Cocking the child's head on the chest may make secretions puddle in the back of the throat.
- Teach children to blow their noses gently.
- Offer lots of fluids to drink. Water is a good drink. For children older than 12 months of age, warm weak tea with lemon and honey tastes good and may soothe throat tickles. Children less than 12 months of age should not be given honey.
- Use a humidifier to keep the humidity around 30-50% during the winter months. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid growth

of bacteria and mold and their subsequent discharge into the air.

- Daily sanitizing with a disinfectant prevents mold from growing in the machine.
- Wash hands if there might have been contact with mucus, eyes, nose or mouth. Proper hand hygiene helps reduce the spread of cold viruses to others.
- Avoid using medicines unless a health care professional determines one is needed. Coughing can occur when the child has a throat tickle from a runny nose, has an ear infection, throat irritation, asthma, or pneumonia. Medications that are sold to stop or suppress coughs usually contain sedatives or antihistamines. Antihistamines may help reduce allergy symptoms, but do nothing for other causes of cough. Some make children sleepy. If a child has asthma, coughing usually means the child needs asthma medicine to help open airways and reduce mucus production. Be sure you have an asthma action plan for any child known to have asthma.

For a cough, try keeping the body well-hydrated by drinking a lot of fluid, and making sure the air is properly humidified. If that doesn't help, the child's health care professional needs to determine what is causing the cough and recommend proper treatment.

For guidance and handouts for parents and staff about many types of infectious diseases in child care, see the 3rd edition of *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, A Quick Reference Guide*, 2013. You can buy the updated book from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Go to www.aap.org/bookstore or call 888/227-1770.

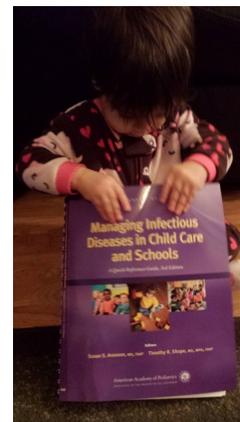


Photo permission granted

Editor's note: This article is a summary and update of articles that appeared in the Winter 2005 issue of Health Link.



Wellness Teaching Tools - FREE Online

Best Practices for Physical Activity. Nemours Health and Prevention Services, version 2 offers:

- Physical Activity Tips such as encouraging moderate to vigorous physical activity daily and throughout the day to accumulate needed levels, and offering a variety of activity opportunities
- Physical Activity Guidelines for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children
- Sample policies for child care and schools, as well as parent and family tip sheets for each age group from infants through school age

Go to: www.nemours.org/service/health/growuphealthy.html.

Go NAP SACC Infant and Child Physical Activity Self-Assessment. This checklist is one of a set of newly updated Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) materials released in 2013. Others are still being tested and will be available in 2014. In addition to this checklist, the NAP SACC website has checklists to self-assess practices for infant feeding, child nutrition, outdoor play & learning, and screen time. Go to:

<http://gonapsacc.org/resources/nap-sacc-materials>.

Sesame Street Healthy Habits for Life Child Care Resource Kit. These richly illustrated materials are available in English and Spanish. Sesame Workshop produced the kit with Nemours Health and Prevention Services and KidsHealth in 2007. It includes lessons and activities for programs to use, as well as ways to engage families in practicing healthy habits at home. Familiar Sesame Street characters help teach the messages. The first two of the three sections of the kit focus on physical activity and nutrition. The third section builds on what the children learned in the first two sections. The kit includes printable downloads, videos, games and songs on iTunes. In addition to healthy habits, the materials teach literacy and math. Access parts of all of these materials on one or more of three websites. Go to:

1. <http://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/GetMoving.pdf>
2. <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/healthyhabits#2>
3. www.kidshealth.org In the section “for educators” select “child care guides”

Get Moving Today Calendar. This tool is available in English and Spanish. It suggests activities for every day of the year. Two forms of the calendar are available: one has months, but no dates to make it OK to use in any year. The other has the current year’s (2014) calendar dates. This is one of a group of products on the website of Head Start Body Start, the National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play, a program of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. The Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided funding for the calendar. Go to:

<http://www.healthychildcare.org/PDF/LetsMove%20CalendarENGLCalendarFULL.pdf>

Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children, Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This tool includes nearly 30 files to make up a notebook. Most of the files provide information and suggestions to encourage healthful nutrition and physical activity for 2-5 year old children in early care and education programs. In addition, to help users make a ring notebook version of the handbook, the files include a front and back cover, binder spine insert, and section dividers. Use these to make collection of curriculum ideas to consult again and again. Go to:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-and-wellness-tips-young-children-provider-handbook-child-and-adult-care-food-program>.

Violence Prevention



Many studies show the harmful effects of exposing children to violence in television shows, computer games, music and movies. Violence in media promotes aggressive behavior, nightmares and fear of being harmed. Most of it minimizes

the consequences of violent actions. The review of evidence by experts at the American Academy of Pediatrics confirms that "...media violence is one of the causes of real-life violence and aggression." *Pediatrics* 2009;124;1495

In the United States, even before the widespread use of smart phones, children less than 6 years of age spent an average of 2 hours a day watching screen media. Those between 8 and 18 years of age averaged more than triple that amount. Now, we see many very young children being allowed to play with smart phones. It is likely that children's viewing time has increased.

The AAP's 2009 policy statement reported how many families put TVs in their children's bedrooms. The rates were 19% of infants, 29% of 2-3 year olds, 43% of 4-6 year olds, and 68% of children 8 years of age and older. Research shows that having a TV in the child's bedroom decreases their physical activity, increases the risk of obesity, and interferes with their participation in activities that are more developmentally appropriate.

The majority of TV shows, screen games and popular music include glamorized interpersonal verbal and physical abuse. Essentially all of the animated movies and games made for children include violence. These media capture children's attention, but teaching them nothing about suffering and loss that result from violence.

Young children lack the ability to tell the difference between fantasy and reality. They imitate and adopt behaviors they observe. Children need adult guidance to avoid exposure to violence. If they are exposed to portrayal of violence as a thrilling experience, a trusted adult should explain how it is harmful to everyone involved.

Fear of violence leads to excessive vigilance and anxiety. Some adults have increased carrying weapons to respond to perceived threats. The evidence shows that more weapon carrying leads to more violence. It does not prevent violence.

Early childhood professionals can:

- Resist use of passive and violent media in early education facilities. Encourage families to limit these media experiences elsewhere.
- Encourage families to take TVs out of bedrooms and limit screen time altogether.
- Avoid portrayal of violence as exciting, entertaining or an appropriate way to respond to conflict. When a child experiences violence in real life or in the media, talk about the pain and loss that everyone involved suffers.

For more about how to prevent and help children cope with exposure to violence, go to www.healthychildren.org. Put "violence" in the search box to select from more than 350 articles, videos, and audio messages about this topic.

Food Allergies and Asthma

Many children and adults have asthma. Up to 90% of children with asthma have allergies also. Wheezing, irritation of eyes and noses may be an allergic response to substances like pollens, animal dander, or dust mites. Nearly a quarter of children with asthma have food allergies too.

Early education and child care providers must be prepared to respond to a situation that involves a severe allergic reaction. Without prompt administration of an appropriate medication, someone with an allergic reaction may die.

Giving life-saving medications often requires use of a medical device. Be sure to get instruction from a health professional about how and when to use them. Breathing emergencies may require use of an inhaled medication. When a food allergy causes breathing problems, swelling of lips, tongue or skin bumps, an immediate injection of epinephrine is needed.



Plan ahead. Be sure everyone who might be with someone who is known to have asthma or allergies has received instruction from a health professional about what to do.

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5: Food Allergies and Asthma)



A child's parent may know what to do. However, few parents are skilled educators of others about the proper techniques. They may omit essential steps from their instructions or may not be using the correct technique themselves. The instruction should include having the person who might have to use emergency medication show a health professional how to do it correctly.



Each staff member and child who has had allergy and/ or asthma symptoms should have a current and easily accessed Allergy or Asthma Action Plan. Ask that the person's health professional update this plan at each health care visit.

Use the newly updated, fully online ECELS Self-Learning Module about Asthma. It includes an Asthma Action Plan form and illustrated instructions about how to use inhaled medications. This self-learning module earns 2 hours of PA Keys credit. It includes watching a video, reviewing print material and completing a self-assessment.

Be sure that each person with a known food allergy has an emergency care plan too. The Food Allergy Research and Education organization (FARE) has a form on their website that was updated 8/2013. For the form, go to:

<http://www.foodallergy.org/document.doc?id=234>.

Influenza Vaccine – A Smart Choice

Flu vaccine will prevent severe illnesses and deaths, even this late in the season. Flu is spreading in Pennsylvania. Healthy people can get very sick. Some have died. **EVERYONE** older than 6 months of age **SHOULD GET THE 2013-14 FLU VACCINE.**

In this Issue:

- Heating, Ventilation and Humidity
- Affordable Health Care
- Colds, Coughs and Runny Noses
- Wellness Teaching Tools - Free Online
- Violence Prevention
- Food Allergies and Asthma
- Influenza Vaccine - A Smart Choice
- Libby Ungvary - ECELS Staff Member for 20 years



Libby Ungvary (center) with PA AAP Exec. Director Suzanne Yunghans (left) & ECELS Pediatric Advisor, Dr. Beth DeIConte (right)

Libby Ungvary - ECELS Staff Member for 20 Years

Libby came to work in ECELS at the PA Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in 1993. Her masters degree in Health Education and experience as a Head Start Health Coordinator provided a sound foundation for the work. Until 2004, she was an ECELS Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator. In this role, she ably arranged, planned and delivered professional development for early education and child care providers.

When Libby stepped into the Director position in 2004, she brought her steady, calm, competent leadership to that role. Over the years, she has managed a variety of funding streams to sustain the mission of ECELS to improve the quality of health and safety practices in early education and child care programs. Her many and continuing achievements deserve to be celebrated!

Published 1/3/14 at www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org.
Editor: Susan S. Aronson, MD, FAAP. Contact ECELS at: 484-446-3003 or 800-24-ECELS; ecels@paaap.org;
PA AAP, Rose Tree Corporate Center, Bldg II, Suite 3007, 1400 N. Providence Road, Media, PA 19063.