

Sick kids: Send them to daycare or keep them home? [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS It's long been a truism that children's daycare can be a petri dish, full of bugs just waiting to pounce. Now, a body representing Canadian pediatricians is for the first time addressing just how parents, staff and doctors can do more to prevent the spread of infection in licensed care. "We have to figure out when it's safe for children to be in a child-care facility, when should they be at home and when should they be seeing a physician," says Mia Lang, lead author of a new Canadian Paediatric Society position statement about the prevention of injury and infections in daycare. One factor contributing to infectious children attending daycare, highlighted in a separate Ontario survey of child-care workers, is that parents can be under pressure not to miss work to stay home with a child. In the survey, 64 per cent of child-care workers say they have felt pressure from parents to care for a sick kid. The new CPS statement suggests updates to a number of regulations that are in place in licensed daycares. Among the recommendations: All child-care centres should have a written policy (in accordance with provincial or territorial health policies) on the management of a sick child, which is reviewed by all staff. The policy should contain information on recognizing an emergent illness or injury, and on when to call for an ambulance, the proper use of antibiotics and the characteristics of common pediatric infections. ... Dr. Lang, a pediatrician at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton, says the risk of respiratory illnesses is one of her biggest concerns. As daycare use increases in Canada, research suggests that for every nine hours a child is in daycare a week, there is a 12 per cent increase in respiratory illness days. ... The Ontario survey of child-care workers found that 69 per cent said they had accepted a child with an upper respiratory tract infection back into care because they were taking antibiotics - without clarifying the nature of the child's illness. "That's unfortunate because an antibiotic may not have been the right medication choice," Dr. Lang says. First, the cause of colds and some respiratory infections are viruses, not bacteria. In these cases, not only will an antibiotic not make a child well, it will do nothing to stop the spread of infection. Second, the overuse of antibiotics may contribute to antibiotic resistance and side effects such as diarrhea. The CPS statement also encourages government and businesses to develop more sick-care centres, or even "sick rooms" in current centres, staffed by health-care workers, both to keep sick kids away from others and to reduce worker absenteeism. ... - reprinted from The Globe and Mail

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