

# Early childhood education and care (ECEC) COVID-19 guidance for families

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings (long day care, family day care and outside school hours care) are at a higher risk of COVID-19 transmission due to the close interactions between people and the amount of time spent in settings that are often indoors.

Children are less likely to have serious illness from COVID-19, but they can still transmit the virus to others and therefore it is important to follow the health advice and consider your individual circumstances.

The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) has useful information for families: [COVID-19 and children: Frequently asked questions](#).

All staff in ECEC services are required to be vaccinated. All family members should have their COVID-19 booster doses as soon as eligible to reduce the likelihood of severe disease and transmission.

## Who is at risk of transmission in an ECEC service?

The transmission risk of COVID-19 varies depending on the amount of time spent with the person with COVID-19 and whether it was in an indoor or outdoor setting.

If a staff member or child at the service is positive for COVID-19, those at highest risk are children and staff who have been indoors with the positive person. Transmission can still occur outdoors, however it is lower risk than indoors. If the length of the contact is short, such as a parent or carer who is positive for COVID-19 quickly dropping off or picking up a child, the risk is low.

Although transmission of COVID-19 in ECEC services is likely, COVID-19 remains a relatively mild illness for most children.

## What do I need to do if there is a positive case?

Your ECEC provider will tell you when there has been a case at the centre.

It is likely there will be other cases in the ECEC service in the two weeks after the initial case's attendance at the centre. Families should consider this when making decisions about ECEC attendance of your child during this period including the risk of spread to other members of the household (such as vulnerable adults).

If your child is at high risk of severe COVID-19 illness because of underlying health issues, you should consider keeping them at home for at least 7 days following a positive COVID-19 case in the centre, so they are not re-exposed as this is the highest risk period. Please speak to your GP if you need more advice.

NSW Health advice for each level of risk is outlined in [Information for people exposed to COVID-19](#). The majority of exposures within an ECEC service are likely to be high risk for spread of COVID-19, noting the disease is generally mild in children.

## What if someone in my household tests positive to COVID-19?

Children and staff who live with someone who has COVID-19 are household contacts and must follow the [self-isolation guidelines](#). They must take a rapid antigen test as soon as possible and self-isolate for 7 days from the last time they were in contact with the COVID positive person.

## Where do I go for more information on rapid antigen testing?

The [getting tested for COVID-19](#) factsheet has more information on testing.

## How can we help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in ECEC services?

There are simple steps we can all take to help slow the spread of COVID-19. These include:

- Children and staff should take a rapid antigen test immediately if they have symptoms and not attend the ECE service until they are well, even if their RAT is negative.
- For children and staff at high risk of infection following contact with a COVID-19 positive person in an ECEC service, the most effective way of protecting others is self-isolate for 7 days following contact with the positive person. If this is not possible, they should stay home as much as possible, avoid visitors to the home and minimise social interaction with those outside their household, especially vulnerable people, for the 7 days following contact with a COVID-19 case.
- Staying 1.5 metres away from other people where possible and avoid crowding children together
- Staff and adults wearing a mask at all times at the service
- Cleaning hands regularly with hand sanitiser or soap and running water for 20 seconds
- All family members and staff should get vaccinated (including having a booster) as soon as they are eligible.